



THE INDEPENDENT

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INSIDE TODAY

CHILDCARE/19
A new Penelope Leach speaks out, 20 years on.

HEALTH/18
Clinics and empathy: time for male equality with women?

TODAY'S NEWS

Iraq threatens to shoot down American planes

Iraq has threatened to shoot down American surveillance planes that fly over its airspace as part of UN weapons inspections. Iraqi Ambassador Nizar Hamdoun sent a letter on Sunday night to the chief weapons inspector Richard Butler warning him that Iraqi forces were on alert for a possible US air strike. The US Ambassador at the United Nations, Bill Richardson, yesterday called the Iraqi threat an "irresponsible escalation" of the crisis between the United Nations and Iraq and "a direct threat on the United Nations". Page 10

Breast cancer reforms

After a ferocious Commons attack on the performance of West Country breast screening, Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, promised major reforms throughout the country. Speaking after publication of a report on the East Devon breast screening service, which found in an audit that 229 women out of 1,920 were misdiagnosed, Mr Dobson blamed the NHS internal market for the failure of those in charge to pick up the problem and act on it earlier. Two radiologists running the Exeter service are believed to have failed to send women with evidence of microcalcification - tiny deposits of calcium in the breast which can signal the start of cancer - for further tests. Page 5

The winter drought

England and Wales remain gripped by drought, despite the summer rain. Only eight of the last 30 months have had above average rainfall in England and Wales. Shortages and hosepipe bans are likely next year unless something nearer to normal rainfall resumes over the winter, though the drought is a covert and patchy one. It isn't a uniformly depressing picture, though: after years of criticism, water companies have become more adept at coping with scarce resources. But September and now October have had below average rainfall, giving a poor start to the key autumn and winter period when the nation's water resources are replenished. Page 16

Trucks outwit French blockade

More than 100 lorry drivers' barricades went up all over France yesterday. By the middle of the day, there were truck blockades at strategic points across the country. But French police are not just standing by and watching. From early morning, riot police threatened to use large mobile cranes to tow away offending vehicles in the most politically sensitive spots: they forced truck drivers to abandon barriers on the Spanish and German borders and at key points near Paris and Lille.

Although the port of Calais remained blocked, the French drivers made no attempt to prevent access to the Channel Tunnel. Several ferries were diverted to Belgian ports and British drivers were able to drive freely across the Belgian border. Page 3

Foxed: Government to kill off a popular Bill



The House of Commons wants to ban foxhunting. A survey of 402 MPs published last week showed that almost three-quarters of them, including all the 11 Cabinet ministers who responded, back the Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill. Published today by Michael Foster, a Labour backbencher, it would make foxhunting with dogs a criminal offence. But it isn't just the

MPs. The public wants to ban foxhunting. That is true even in the countryside: a Mori poll, based on a sample of 1,500 people in rural areas, found 57 per cent in favour of Mr Foster's Bill. Sixty per cent of them disagreed with the proposition that hunting with dogs is an important part of the British way of life.

So it is just the House of Lords stand-

ing between Reynard and the hounds of death? No, actually, it is the Prime Minister: Tony Blair has decided not to give Mr Foster's Bill government time and that means, almost certainly that the bill will die, and so too will many thousands more of hunted-down foxes. Full story, page 16.

Photograph: John Lawrence

The death of the Royal Opera House

The Royal Opera House is no more. Under a dramatic series of deliberately egalitarian proposals from Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture the building will be renamed 'Covent Garden'. David Lister says it will become an independent receiving house for the Royal Opera, Royal Ballet and the English National Opera.

the arts through the Arts Council quango. It was clear that the Government had had enough of the Royal Opera House's shambling management of their £15m a year public funding and £78m Lottery grant.

Last week a select committee chairman labelled that management "incompetent", and their peripatetic existence during the House's closure "shambolic".

Under Mr Smith's plan, the ROH will become merely a receiving house, embracing the ENO in its fold with all three companies having their own boards. The positions of Lord Chadlington, ROH chairman, and Mary Allen, chief executive, were unclear.

Mr Smith has appointed Sir Richard Eyre, former artistic director of the National Theatre to lead a review and "radical reassessment" of the Covent Garden site. But his letter to Sir Richard setting out the basis of the review spells out in dramatically clear terms the scenario the Government expects to achieve.

Mr Smith told Sir Richard: "In particular I would like to see the work become more accessible to all of us, whether through more touring activity, through education work or broadcast opportunities. I believe it is also right to ask hard questions about value for money."

Mr Smith said last he had agreement from both the chairmen of the ROH and ENO for his proposals, though there was speculation that they were given little choice. All three companies have been told that under Mr Smith's plan they will not see a reduction in funding.

Contentious matters like seat prices will be addressed by Sir Richard's review.

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Woodward's lawyers admit her lesser guilt

When she was sentenced to life last week, Louise Woodward said to the court: "I would just like to maintain my innocence". But the defence yesterday conceded that she could be guilty of manslaughter, if not of murder. Our correspondent watched the wretched drama unfold.

As the campaign to have Louise Woodward absolved of her Murder Two conviction reached a crescendo on both sides of the Atlantic yesterday, she was forced to admit, at least by implication if not actual confession, to guilt to the lesser, but still grievous crime, of the manslaughter of baby Matthew Eappen.

In one more day of extraordinary anguish in Cambridge, Massachusetts when almost 100 free-Louise demonstrators marched around the courthouse, it emerged that Woodward's defence team was submitting a motion to Judge Hiller Zobel for a reduced charge of manslaughter. It also came to light that when the jurors began deliberations last week, a majority believed she was innocent. By a painful, and by all accounts highly irregular process, that majority for innocence was transformed over 27 hours into consensus for guilt.

The defence, in documents submitted to the court last night, asked for the verdict to be set aside and the alternative of a new trial. But crucially, Woodward "further moved, without in any way waiving her claim that the evidence is insufficient to support conviction of any sense, to enter a finding of guilty on the lesser included offence of manslaughter."

Significantly, however, the prosecu-

tor team signalled that it would not fight the lesser manslaughter charge in arguments before Judge Zobel today. Of the manslaughter option, Gerard Leone, the lead prosecutor at the trial, said: "We would be reasonable." He went on: "We will listen to anything that is placed before us."

Senior court officials told *The Independent* yesterday, that Judge Zobel, if he were to agree to such a motion, would simply declare the Murder Two conviction downgraded to manslaughter. A final decision will almost certainly not be offered by the Judge today, who has indicated he would rather take time to consider the issues and put his final decision in writing. If he does

BY DAVID USBORNE

declare a manslaughter verdict, he would wait an additional period to deliver sentencing. Woodward has presumably been swayed finally by the knowledge that the sentence for manslaughter, would probably be three to five years with credit for the nine months already served. Thus Woodward would be home for the millennium.

Whether the plethora of information now spilling out about the extraordinary nature of the jury deliberations will influence the judge in any way is unclear. We now know, for instance, that many jurors felt aggrieved that they did not have the chance to convict on manslaughter instead of murder.

"We were in a no-win situation here," one juror, Stephen Colwell, told ABC television news. "I think if other choices were avail-

able to us, then potentially manslaughter may have been the verdict."

Most extraordinary, however, are the details of how the jury reached its final determination. Mr Colwell said that at the outset, the jury took a vote and was seven to five in favour of acquitting Woodward. But then, in a manner of working that appears to have been the reverse of instructions from the judge, the jury began by identifying areas of reasonable doubt and one by one eliminating them. Judge Zobel had told jurors to consider the charge and to throw it out if, and as soon as, reasonable doubt was acknowledged.

After taking votes on each of these individual issues, they finally, last Thursday night, began voting on the verdict itself. Three ballots were taken and they ran nine to three for conviction, followed by ten to two and eventually twelve to nothing. There were tears from jurors but no yelling, he said. Apparently the jurors were swayed finally by two facts: their absolute faith in the testimony of doctors who first treated Matthew Eappen at Boston's Children's Hospital - an institution that is utterly revered in the city - and their inability to disappoint the Eappens if they decided to free Woodward. "There's no way we could face the Eappens or the citizens of the commonwealth [of Massachusetts] and say 'We think she did it, but we're going to let her go,'" Mr Colwell said.

When it was all over and the verdict had been given, members of the jury sat silently in the jury room for two minutes listening as the chilling cries of Woodward came through the walls from the courtroom. They also heard loud cursing and a chair being thrown in the room of the alternate jurors next door as they reacted with fury to the verdict.

Judge's big test, page 3

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2/BRIEFING

COLUMN ONE

A county of cream teas, pasties and ... coffins?

Watching a television documentary on an all-purpose supermarket turned Ian Vosper away from kitchen appliances to death. Now, his eco-friendly flat-pack coffins, made by a Cornish firm with just four employees, are being inspected by the Mexican president, and promoted by United Nations officials as the cheap bio-degradable answer to grave robbers in Angola.

Mr Vosper's company, Eco-F systems, is on the verge of signing a £15m export order with Mexico for 600,000 coffins, and the Angolan government is reportedly close to agreeing a deal. The "cask-kits" have been sold around the world; everyone, it seems, is keen to get involved in this green, user-friendly way of depositing their dearly beloved into the earth.

Everyone, that is, apart from the authorities in this country. To cope with this sudden rise in demand Mr Vosper will need to take on at least 30 more workers, and increase the workspace of his St Ives firm from 1,500 square feet to 15,000 square feet. He was hoping to get some kind of government funding to help with the expansion, but he hoped in vain.

Mr Vosper started making the cask-kits after seeing a programme on the French Rocce' Cleric supermarket chain. He recalled: "There was a man who bought a coffin off the shelf for his own funeral and loaded it into a Renault 5. But he was having difficulties. I saw how much better it would be if the thing came in kit form. So we decided to produce it and also make it eco-friendly."

Mr Vosper's firm is the only one making wooden flat-pack coffins - there are others that produce cardboard coffins but they are said to be of a "here's one I made earlier" type.

Mr Vosper is disappointed by lack of government backing, but accepts that such is the rocky path of creativity - recognition abroad, neglect at home. In Mexico, the coffins may become a political hot potato. President Ernesto Zedillo has taken a keen interest in the project. One of his brothers heads one of the biggest government-backed funeral institutions in Mexico City, offering subsidised ceremonies to the disadvantaged.

There is, of course, no suggestion of impropriety involving the Zedillo brothers, this is not "coffingate". But the Mexicans are at the moment sensitive about the business dealings of presidential relations. Raul Salinas, the brother of the previous President, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, is in prison on charges of murder and illegal enrichment.

In Angola, debilitated by a long, bitter civil war, the government faces problems from grave robbers who dig up coffins to sell on the thriving black coffin market. Bereaved relatives, understandably, get upset.

The cask-kits will counter this. Because they are bio-degradable, suitable treatment would mean that within an hour they would break apart if anyone tries to lift them up. This advantage was pointed out to officials in Luanda by a UN official, Adrian Dunderdale, who had visited Mr Vosper's factory while in the UK. The price, too, is competitive, the Cornish coffins cost \$100 (£61) each while the traditional ones being imported to Angola can be as much as \$500.

— Kim Sengupta

PEOPLE



Daniella finds feminist life in Channel 4 drama

Channel 4 has £350m to spend on programmes for next year and will air dramas by Alan Bleasdale, Lynda La Plante, the writer of *Prime Suspect*, and a history of feminism by Fay Weldon, starring Daniella Nardini (above) who starred in *This Life*.

The channel's increased budget, which is up 13 per cent on this year and is 90 per cent more than five years ago, comes from selling £25m of extra advertising and sponsorship airtime during 1997, and £25m returning to the channel as its controversial funding deal with ITV is scrapped. The channel believes that by 1999 it will have an extra £80m to spend on programmes.

Daniella Nardini will star in *Big Women*, an account of feminism as viewed from inside a fictional women's publishing house based loosely on Virago. It has been described as *My Friends in the North* for feminists, and Carmen Callil, one time head of Virago, has been consulted on its storyline.

Nardini, who played the hard-living lawyer Anna in BBC 2's cult hit *This Life*, will play Layla, one of a group of four ambitious career women.

Michael Jackson, Channel 4's chief executive, told a meeting of advertising agencies in London yesterday that drama was his highest priority for the

channel. Summer next year will also see the airing of a new Alan Bleasdale drama, *Soft Sand, Blue Sea*, about the lives of two Irish children, and a thriller about a deadly Internet game scripted by Lynda La Plante.

Coming early in the year is the long-awaited four part dramatisation of the life of Oswald Mosley, written by *Birds of a Feather* writers Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran. Mr Jackson also outlined plans for £25m to be spent next year on creating a Channel 4-branded art-house movie channel that will broadcast on digital frequencies. On its existing channel next year Channel 4 will premier the movies it funded: Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* and Ken Loach's *Carla's Song*, as well as bought-in films like *Quiz Show*, *Little Women* and *The Usual Suspects*.

This winter the channel will broadcast a new series of the cult comedy *Father Ted*, a new situation comedy about an exiled African dictator, called *Exiled*, and *Kangaroo Palace*, a drama about Australians living it up in London during the Sixties.

New factual series planned for the winter include a history of Henry VIII written by controversialist historian Dr David Starkey.

— Paul McCann, Media Correspondent

The real Mr Mastermind comes out to play



Mr Mastermind, the elusive figure who has featured on the box of the code-cracking board game for 25 years, has been tracked down after a nationwide hunt.

Accompanied by a young oriental woman and with a cat on his knee, the bearded man has peered from the cover of 35 million cardboard boxes. And, just in time for the game's 25th anniversary this week, the real Bill Woodward, 73, has stepped forward.

The retired hair-salon owner, who lives less than a quarter of a mile from Invicta Plastic, which makes the game, admitted his starring role was an accident.

"The advertising agency doing the picture backed on to my hairdressing salon and was run by someone I knew," he explained. "And when a model failed to show for the 1972 shoot I was snapped up. They wanted a mysterious air ... and I suppose with the silver beard I fitted the bill."

Today he will join real Russian spy Oleg Gordievsky, wartime code-cracker Alan Stripp, Mastermind inventor Mordechai Meirovitz and a host of other code experts at the Cabinet War Rooms in London for the anniversary celebrations.

— Amanda Kelly

Higgins' girlfriend walks free

The girlfriend of snooker legend Alex Higgins was freed by a court yesterday after a charge that she had wounded him was dropped for lack of evidence.

Holley Haise, 34, of Clifton, Swinton, Greater Manchester, had been charged with unlawfully wounding the former world champion with intent to cause grievous bodily harm earlier this

year. Appearing in court under the surname Croucher, she was freed after a two-minute hearing at Salford magistrates' court in which the prosecution applied for a discharge because there was insufficient evidence to proceed.

Higgins, who was found by police on 15 August lying dazed and covered in blood near his girlfriend's house, was not in court.

UPDATE

HEALTH

New variant CJD claims 21 lives

Twenty-one people have died of the "new variant" form of the brain-wasting Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (v-CJD) caused by BSE, according to figures released by the Department of Health yesterday. Another person is still alive with the fatal, incurable illness.

So far, eight Britons have died of the disease, compared to 10 in total last year, and three in 1995. But the course of the disease, which can take more than a decade to show symptoms after the victim is infected, means that it is still too early to use this data to determine whether any full-scale epidemic of v-CJD among the UK population is on the way. Scientists last month demonstrated that the time between infection and symptoms depends strongly on genetic makeup.

Because of time lags caused by the collection and confirmation of disease details, the figures do not include Chris Warne, of Ripley, Derbyshire, who was thought to have died of v-CJD last month.

— Charles Arthur, Science Editor

LAW & ORDER

Gun surrender fails to hit target

More than 142,000 handguns have been surrendered to the police, tens of thousands fewer than had been previously expected, it was announced yesterday.

The firearms were surrendered following the introduction of legislation outlawing high-calibre handguns in the wake of the Dunblane massacre. The police had predicted that 160,000 high-powered handguns were held by shooters in Britain, but the Home Office now believes the total is far lower. So far, 116,000 larger calibre weapons have been surrendered and 26,000 smaller, 22 calibre guns have been handed in ahead of legislation going through Parliament to ban them. Home Office officials said yesterday that the police figure was an over-estimate produced in haste for the Callen inquiry into the Dunblane killings. Thousands of gun owners have chosen to export their weapons rather than surrender them, and Alan Michael, the Home Office minister, acknowledged there could still be some held illegally. Under the ban, which came into force on 1 October, anyone possessing a larger calibre handgun faces up to 10 years in prison.

MEDICINE

The dangerous side of antibiotics



Over-use of antibiotics is putting patients' lives at risk, health chiefs warned today. The British Medical Association claims "unnecessary and inappropriate" use of antibiotics - which account for 70 per cent of all treatment courses - has increased people's resistance to the drugs and this is causing serious problems in controlling public health worldwide.

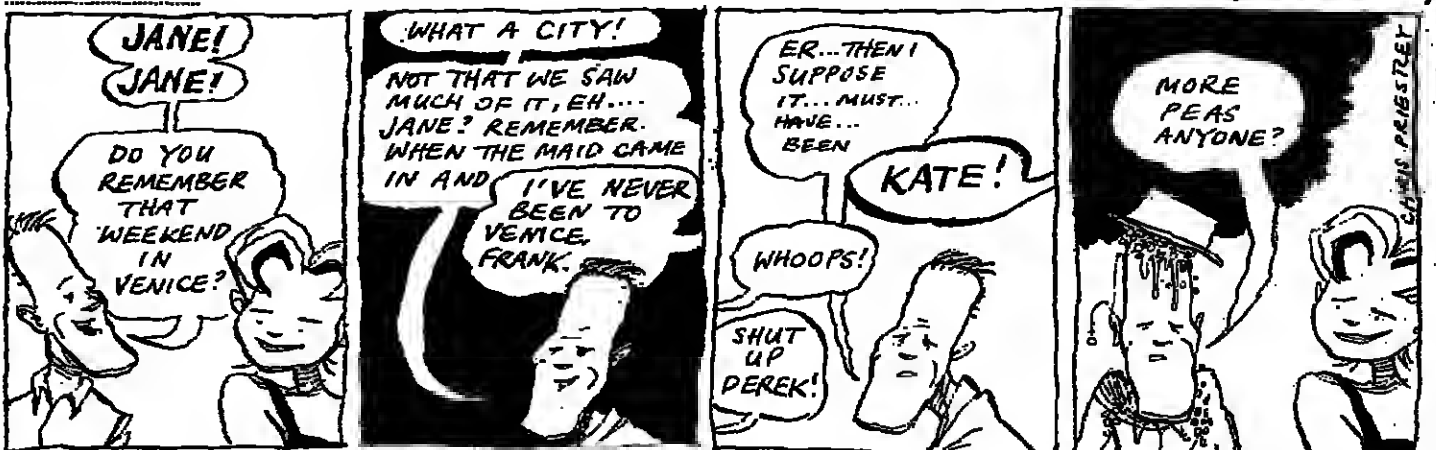
Infectious diseases such as meningitis, pneumonia and tuberculosis, which are treated with mainly antibiotics, are becoming more difficult to control as they become resistant to the drugs and hospital acquired infections are spreading more rapidly, it says. To encourage patients not to ask their doctor for antibiotics for every cough, sneeze or splutter, the BMA today launched a campaign called: Antibiotics: not a miracle cure!

TOURIST RATES

| | | | |
|----------------------|--------|------------------------|---------|
| Australia (dollars) | 2.27 | Italy (lira) | 2,774 |
| Austria (schillings) | 19.79 | Japan (yen) | 198.59 |
| Belgium (francs) | 58.14 | Malta (lira) | 0.62 |
| Canada (\$) | 2.29 | Netherlands (guilders) | 3.17 |
| Cyprus (pounds) | 0.83 | Norway (kroner) | 11.52 |
| Denmark (kroner) | 10.79 | Portugal (escudos) | 286.02 |
| France (francs) | 9.43 | Spain (pesetas) | 237.34 |
| Germany (marks) | 2.82 | Sweden (kroner) | 12.34 |
| Greece (drachme) | 446.10 | Switzerland (francs) | 2.30 |
| Hong Kong (\$) | 12.54 | Turkey (lira) | 291.162 |
| Ireland (punts) | 1.08 | USA (\$) | 1.63 |

Source: Thomson Cook
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HIGH
Life

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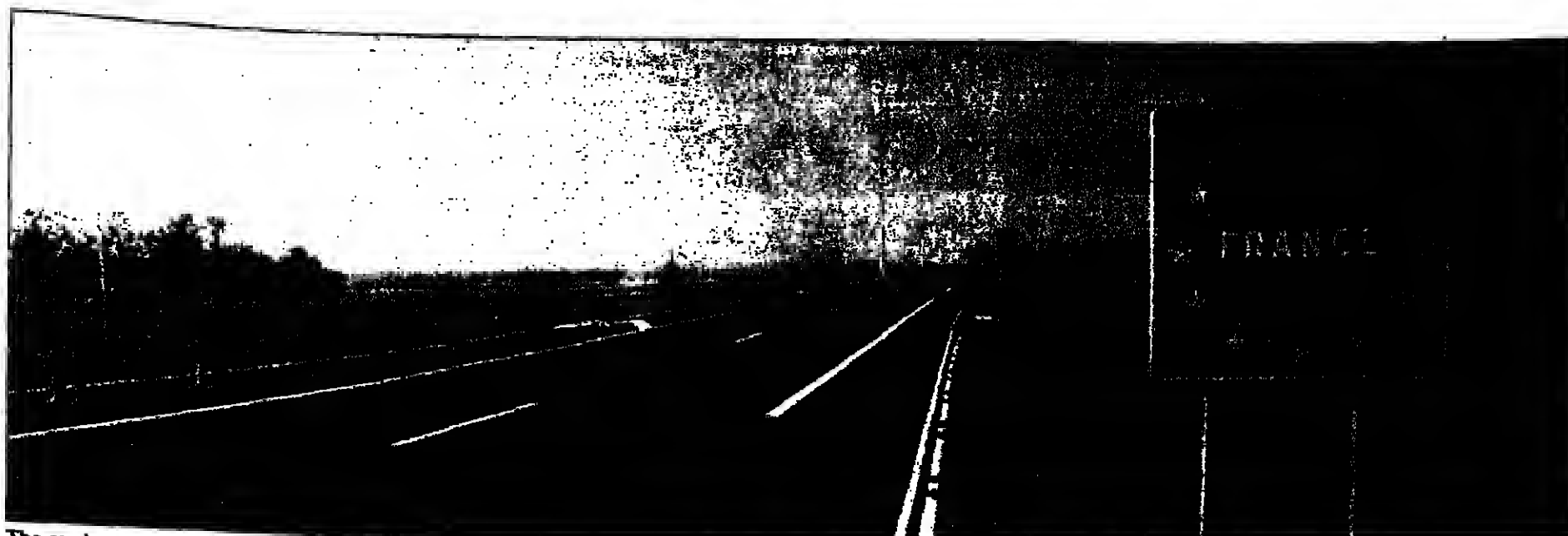
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3/LEADING STORIES

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY
4 NOVEMBER 1997



The road to nowhere: The blockade by French lorry drivers - such as those in Lille (below) - has emptied roads including the A26 near Belgium (above) Photographs: Brian Harris

French truckers raise the barricades

Almost a year after a French lorry-driver's strike disrupted transport throughout Europe, more than 100 barricades went up all over France yesterday. There are negotiations today to end the dispute, but John Lichfield and Ian Burrell find little impact so far on British and other foreign drivers



remained blocked, the French drivers made no attempt to prevent access to the Channel Tunnel. Several cross-channel ferries were diverted to Belgian ports and British drivers were able to drive freely across the Belgian border.

In many other places targeted by the strikers, such as fuel and food distribution centres and autoroutes, the truck barricades went unchallenged. Panic-buying of petrol over the weekend has already left many filling stations short of fuel.

Despite the disruption, the French drivers, who often work long hours for low pay, can count once again on considerable public sympathy. They complain that their employers have reneged on promises made to end last year's dispute, including a one-off payment of £300. The drivers are now asking for a minimum wage of roughly £12,000 a year. On some autoroutes yesterday motorists, after queuing for many minutes to squeeze through the gaps left for cars in the barricades, tossed money into baskets held by the striking drivers.

Most press commentary in France has been sympathetic to the drivers and critical of the federation of large transport companies, which walked out of negotiations late last week. The large companies have been accused by unions of cynically engineering the strike in order to cripple the tens of thousands of small transport operators. The transport minister, Jean-Claude Gaysot - himself a Communist former union leader - will lead

a fresh attempt to resolve the dispute this morning.

"It makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up," said Paul Garner, a stranded lorry driver, as he spent yesterday cooped up in his cab in the blockaded French port of Le Havre. The sight which most annoyed him was not the buddle of strikers who had parked cars across the port entrance, but the French truckers who were driving past him on to the ferry carrying goods to Britain.

They were being joined by a

procession of up to 40 disillusioned British truckers who had chosen to go home with their undelivered loads rather than face an indefinite wait on the quayside in France.

Mr Garner, 41, from Lincoln, had been planning a four-day haul to Bordeaux, making 12 deliveries of various goods en route. After arriving at 7am on the night ferry from Portsmouth, he had yet to leave the docks last night. "This place is well stitched-up," he said. "I agree with what the French are doing. I support them fully but they are stopping us working."

The Socialist-led government of Lionel Jospin, elected in June, remains broadly popular; it is also seen as being on the truckers' side.

On the evidence of the first day (and the mood may change) the new government feels confident enough to take action to keep key routes and borders open. The EU commissioner for transport, the former Labour leader Neil Kinnock, sent the French government a politely worded warning at the weekend, reminding them that Paris had a duty under European law to guarantee the free cross-border movement of people and goods.

'Hiller the Killer' faces biggest test of his career

Hiller Zobel is one of the most experienced judges in Massachusetts. But in 18 years on the bench, he has never had to deal with a case like the Louise Woodward trial, probably the biggest in the state's history. As David Osborne explains, it would test the mettle of anyone

self. Among his books is a history of the 1770 Boston Massacre, in which soldiers of the British colonial forces were slaughtered by the French and their Indian allies.

After the 1992 OJ Simpson trial, Zobel wrote a controversial article on the jury system in which he said: "It is asking the ignorant to use the incomprehensible to decide the unknowable." That remark has been seized upon as he considers the conduct of the Woodward jury.

His humour was best revealed to journalists in his recounting of the various items stolen from his courthouse chambers in recent years, including a black gown one Halloween.

His own life has not been uneventful. When he was 25, he was kidnapped by two escaped prisoners and held hostage in a terrifying car ride from Boston to Iowa. He escaped unhurt. And his interest in the media is explained by short stint he did as a young man as a cub reporter on a San Francisco newspaper. A son - one of his seven children - is a journalist.

The children are from a marriage to Rya Zobel, from whom he recently split in a very acrimonious divorce. She is a federal judge and was short-listed by the White House after President Clinton's 1992 election victory as a possible US Attorney General (the post was given to Janet Reno from Florida).

As speculation rages about what he may do about the Woodward verdict, attention has focused on a 1984 murder trial presided over by Hiller Zobel. The defence of a police officer convicted of Murder Two, as Woodward has been, argued for the verdict to be set aside and a new trial granted. That is exactly what he did.

Plans for a people's opera strike a blow at powers of cultural elite

Never before has a government minister transgressed so publicly and blatantly the 50-year-old 'arms length' principle of arts funding. David Lister, Arts News Editor, examines the background to last night's announcement by Chris Smith on future of the Royal Opera House last night



The Royal Opera House: A new role as 'receiving house'

The Culture Secretary dropped more than one bombshell. His proposal that the Royal Opera House become a receiving house for three "equal partner" companies - the Royal Opera, the Royal Ballet and English National Opera - was radical enough.

His further proposal that all three become true "people's companies" and tour the country and run education schemes was a further cultural intervention by the Government. His third announcement, that in his words "stonemasons will remove the words 'Royal Opera House' from that building and it will simply be called Covent Garden will have the cultural establishment reeling.

It is Mr Smith who is now making cultural policy. In making this dramatic change he has been helped by two things. First, the shambling state of affairs at the Royal Opera House, whose board was accused by the chairman of a select committee as being "a self-perpetuating oligarchy".

No longer. With all public sympathy for the ROH extinguished, the opera and ballet companies have simply been taken away from that ROH board by Mr Smith, and

the English National Opera, for so many years a junior partner in London, has been bought in on an equal footing.

The second factor is the National Lottery. Increasingly, Mr Smith has been working behind the scenes to ensure that cash for the arts from the lottery is used to benefit the nation. Significantly, he said last night:

"We must stop getting fixated with buildings. We are taking money out of bricks and mortar and putting it into cultural activity."

Reflect on the words "we are taking." The Government was not meant to "take", give or move any National Lottery money in the arts. All that came under the Arts Council. With one announcement last night Mr Smith signalled the end not just of Covent Garden's self-perpetuating oligarchy, not just of two opera houses in London, but also of the 50-year-old power of the unelected Arts Council to manage cultural life in this country.

When I asked Mr Smith where the Royal Ballet might be during times when it is out in Covent Garden, he waxed lyrical about spaces in Salford and Bristol. New Labour is serious about people's opera and people's ballet and clearly want national companies to be just that from now on.

But there remain many questions to be asked. Foremost, what will happen to the London Coliseum, one of the most distinguished opera houses in Europe. Mr Smith says vaguely that there are many options. That is too vague.

Second, does Lord Chadlington remain chairman of the Royal Opera House and Mary Allen its chief executive or do they become chairman and chief executive of either or both the Royal Opera and Royal Ballet companies? Again, Mr Smith is vague.

Certainly, neither person will have a job with the same power that they have now. But then the people's party has broken the power of the Royal Opera House as surely as the stonemason will chip away at the words on the building in Bow Street.

IN THE INDEPENDENT TOMORROW

JANET SUZMAN
Making Brecht South African



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THE INDEPENDENT JOURNAL

5/HEALTH NEWS

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY
4 NOVEMBER 1997

Slice of life to ease the menopause

An addition to the myriad cures for the menopause was launched yesterday in the shape of a loaf for ladies of a certain age. Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor, looks at modern remedies for an age-old problem.

Hot toast can help ward off hot flushes - but only if it is made with the right kind of loaf. That is the claim made for Burgen bread, a whole-grain loaf launched yesterday and made with soya flour and linseed oil, both sources of plant oestrogens.

Increasing plant oestrogens in the diet is believed to help restore natural oestrogen levels, which decline at the menopause, causing the familiar symptoms of hot flushes, night sweats and rapid mood swings. The makers claim that in China, where more soya is eaten, the problem affects fewer than one in five women and in Japan, which has the highest consumption of plant oestrogens in Asia, there is no word to define the menopause. They say four slices of Burgen Bread give two-thirds of the amount of plant oestrogens of a typical Japanese diet.

The bread, launched by the ageing celebrity novelist Jilly Cooper at a supermarket in west London, joins a range of other foodstuffs, vitamin supplements and treatments claimed to help women gently into their post-childbearing years.



Slice of life: Jilly Cooper with the new product, which is said to be a remedy for the problems of menopause

Photograph: PA

Meningitis victim loses claim over spinal deformity

A 32-year-old meningitis victim left with a "gross" spinal deformity yesterday lost a long legal battle for damages for alleged medical negligence.

Eleftherios Theodorou had sued Camden and Islington Health Authority claiming there was negligence during the first 10 days of his life. But a judge in the High Court in London dismissed his claim.

Judge Brunning said: "There is no doubt that the outcome of events in the late 1960s has had a tragically significant effect upon the plaintiff. But, I am equally in no doubt that this claim must fail."

The judge said Mr Theodorou, of Muswell Hill, north London, was born on August 5, 1965, in the maternity wing of the Whittington Hospital in north London.

He was noted at the time to have a small "dimple" on his spine which his mother pointed out to a female doctor and also to a consultant paediatrician, who examined it and told her there was nothing to worry about.

Mother and baby were discharged after 10 days. But problems with the baby's health

began early in March 1966. The judge said that as a result of "infections and meningitis" the plaintiff had unfortunately "suffered considerably". This included a "spinal deformity which is gross and permanent".

Judge Brunning added that he had not been able to attend mainstream schools and his "intellectual development was accordingly impaired".

During the hearing there was evidence from four experts who all agreed the plaintiff's condition was "extremely rare".

It was claimed on Mr Theodorou's behalf that if he had been referred to a neurosurgeon the "meningitis would not have supervened and the subsequent problems would have been prevented".

But the judge ruled yesterday: "That the clinical response of the paediatrician in 1965 was not negligent in failing to refer the plaintiff to a neurosurgeon."

"The appearance and location of the 'dimple' on the plaintiff's spine did not and ought not to have generated that degree of suspicion requiring a reasonably competent paediatrician to make such a referral."

New national checks after breast cancer screening 'disgrace'

Tougher checks on breast and cervical cancer screening were ordered by Frank Dobson yesterday after the Health Secretary condemned the programmes in Kent and Devon as a 'disgrace'. Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor, reports on the latest government moves to improve the quality of a service that has been beset by scandal.

The faith of women in cancer screening has been undermined by serious failures affecting the programmes and reforms are now necessary to restore public confidence. Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, told the Commons yesterday.

Speaking after publication of a report on the East Devon breast screening service which found that 229 women out of 1,920 were misdiagnosed, Mr Dobson blamed the NHS internal market for the failure of

those in charge to pick up the problem and act on it earlier.

The report, by Sir Kenneth Calman, the Government's Chief Medical Officer, said the two radiologists running the Exeter service, Dr John Brennan and Dr Graham Urquhart, had failed to provide care of the standard that could reasonably be expected. They are understood to have failed to send women with evidence of microcalcification - tiny deposits of calcium in the breast which can signal the start of cancer - for further tests.

Dr Brennan, who was in charge of the breast unit, mounted a legal challenge last week to try to prevent publication of the report. He has been suspended and disciplinary proceedings have been started against him. Dr Urquhart has been moved from breast screening and all his radiological work is being checked.

In a statement to the Commons, Mr Dobson said the failures in the East Devon service paralleled those identified in last month's inquiry into the cervical screening scandal at Canterbury hospital in which five women died and 90,000 smears had to be re-checked.

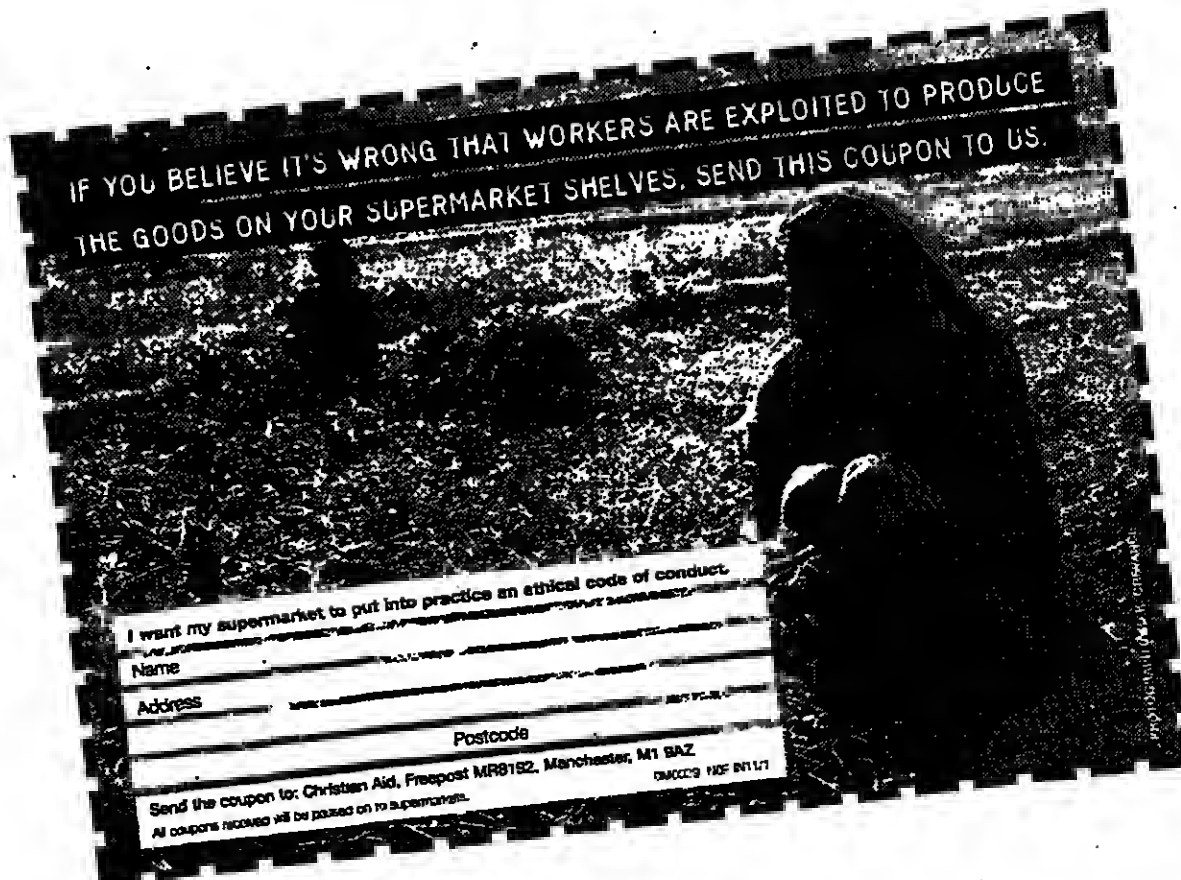
He blamed the internal market for the absence of arrangements to secure national standards and legal obstacles which prevented interference in the affairs of trusts even when they were falling down on the job.

"The breast cancer screening service in Exeter and the cervical cancer screening service in Canterbury... were a disgrace. And the failure to have in place a system which could identify promptly things that were going wrong and then put them right was also a disgrace," he said.

All health authorities and trusts have been ordered to institute a new programme by next February to ensure all screening programmes meet national standards. All breast units have been told to review their arrangements for securing a high quality service and submit reports by next January.

Historically, the cervical screening service has had the greatest problems because it grew slowly from the 1960s with each local service operating its own system. The breast screening service began in 1988 and operated to national standards from the start.

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A former MI6 agent appeared in court yesterday charged with disclosing confidential information about his work. The case, writes Jason Bennetto, Crime Correspondent, threatens to become a repeat of the notorious Spycatcher affair.

He is the first person to be charged under the 1989 Official Secrets Act and could face up to two years in jail if convicted.

He is accused of providing an Australian publisher earlier this year with a synopsis of a book about the Secret Intelligence Service. Mf6 argue that information obtained from his time in the service from 1991 to 1995 would be highly damaging.

Mr Tomlinson, who was named after his lawyer successfully applied for reporting restrictions to be lifted, is understood to have worked in Moscow and Bosnia, recruited spies and was involved in Middle Eastern intelligence.

He was dismissed by Mf6

and attempt to take his case to an industrial tribunal, but Malcolm Rifkind, the then Foreign Secretary, prevented it citing national security reasons".

He was remanded in custody yesterday at Bow Street Magistrates Court in London for a week. He was arrested on Friday and charged under Section 1 of the Official Secrets Act 1989.

Wearing a crumpled suit and open-neck shirt, unshaven and with tousled hair, he spoke only to confirm his name.

Dru Sharping, the Crown Prosecution Service solicitor, said that after leaving the intelligence service, Mr Tomlinson had indicated to his former

employees that he was writing a book. M16 obtained injunctions preventing any publication of the book, but Mr Tomlinson continued with the enterprise, the court was told.

Ms Sharpling said "... in May of this year it was discovered that he might be intending to write a book and to give that book to publishers in Australia."

"Officers of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch were dispatched to Australia to interview a publisher who was intended to give direct evidence of Tomlinson's intention to publish his manuscript."

"We really fear that he will continue to endeavour to make his manuscript available."

Mr Tomlinson was known to have "excellent knowledge" of the workings of the Internet and it was feared that he intended to publish in that medium too, she said.

Outside the court, Mr Tomlinson's solicitor, John Wadham, said: "My client has a genuine grievance against the Secret Intelligence Service which he has never been able to put forward in an independent tribunal or court. It is what he has been trying to do all along."

Government lawyers fear a repeat of the *Spycatcher* affair when Peter Wright, a former MI5 assistant director, successfully published his memoirs in 1987.



Musical youths: Pupils from Longley Primary School in Sheffield, rehearsing for last night's Music for Youth Prom at the Royal Albert Hall in London, where they were joined by other young musicians from across the country

Unio membership has dropped sharply over the past decade in most countries, but the spread of democracy presents historic opportunities, according to the International Labour Office, an arm of the United Nations.

And despite an estimated 10 per cent drop in the number of trade unionists over the past decade, there has been no corresponding reduction in union influence, says the ILO's latest annual World Labour Report.

Duncan Campbell, a senior author of the report and adviser on industrial relations to 10 east Asian countries, argues that the "globalisation" of trade and the increasing independence of individual enterprises, does not necessarily mean the destruction of trade unionism.

Mr Campbell says that while it is likely that some countries will continue to "bid down" the wages and conditions of workers and unions would lose influence, most economies even in the Third World are realising there is a limit to economic expansion fuelled by low costs and unsophisticated products.

There is also evidence that the so-called tiger economies in the Pacific Basin are contemplating some form of labour market regulation in order to cope with growing industrial unrest. That presented unions with a role, he believes.

Part of the explanation for a decline in unions — there are now 337 million members out of a non-agricultural workforce of 1.3 billion — was the removal of Communist governments in central and Eastern Europe where membership of "unions" was compulsory.

Presenting the study in Geneva yesterday, Michel Hansenne, director-general of the I.L.O., said the results pointed to a "turning point" in global industrial relations and that a decline in union membership told only part of the story.

He said: "Where many observers ... see only decline, I see increased democracy, greater pragmatism and freedom for millions of workers to form representative organisations to engage in collective bargaining with their employers."

— *Barrie Clement*

Up to 30 hospitals face legal action from patients who were given LSD to treat a variety of mental disorders and depression.

Lawyers acting for 26 former patients, who have suffered recurring "flashbacks" as a result of being given the drug, will shortly issue writs against a number of hospitals.

The legal action, which is likely to seek damages and compensation running into tens of thousands of pounds, will expose the use of LSD to treat patients for more than 20 years from the 1950s.

Those given the drug – in doses above the amount taken in recreational use – ranged from people with mental illness to alcoholics and those suffering from post-natal depression. They were not told they were being given LSD and nor were they informed of its likely side effects.

These include flashbacks where people re-live their first "trip", sometimes as often as five times a week. One

person has claimed the drug brought on epilepsy.

Solicitors Alexander Harris, who are representing the legally-aided patients, are planning to bring a number of test cases against selected hospitals and health authorities. Senior partner Ann Alexander said that despite the difficulty of individual cases dating back 30 years, they were confident the case would go ahead.

"We anticipate issuing proceedings in the very near future," she said.

The cases became known after patients at Powick Mental Hospital, then part of West Midlands Health authority, complained to their MP, Ken Purchase. It then emerged that the problem was nation wide. Powick hospital has since closed.

A spokesman for the Labour MP said: "Ken is pleased we've got this far - and will be even more pleased if the actions are successful."

— Michael Streever,
Legal Affairs Correspondent

A key figure in the Cleveland abuse crisis said children caught up in it were "the tip of the iceberg." Sue Richardson, Cleveland County Council's child-abuse consultant at the time, was speaking at a conference yesterday marking its tenth anniversary.

Most of the 121 children diagnosed as abuse victims by Middlesbrough General Hospital doctors and taken into care were eventually allowed home, which organisers of the conference still regard as a mistake.

The diagnoses were by doctors Marietta Higgs and Geoffrey Wyatt, who, with Mrs Richardson, were criticised over their roles. Mrs Richardson said: "The figure of 121 was just the tip of the iceberg out of a population of 500,000. It is impossible to say how many more children there might have been."

The Obliterating Prizes

by Adrian Mitchell

A gruesome occurrence fell oo me once
When I was a sammy at oxford
They chose me to be the college's dunce
O I was the lubber of oxford

A conical hat they plunked on my head
Those grievous old gories in oxford
With a D for Duncie wrote up on it in red
Yes I was downderried at oxford

Now underbred dunderheads romp round the town
Through the blithering weather of oxford
Each wears a gold cap and a silvery gown
Each moocher but adrian in oxford

And I cautiously watch their regalia flap
As I stand in the corner in oxford
For now I've been wearing that overhead hat
For twenty dark blue years of oxford

This week's poems celebrate the 65th birthday of Adrian Mitchell, the lyrical, radical conscience of British poetry for 40 years. They come from the new collection *Hear on the Left: Poems 1953-1984*, published by Bloodaxe Books at £9.95. "Among all the voices of the Court," says Ted Hughes, Adrian Mitchell is "a voice as welcome as Lear's Fool".

The television-standards watchdog turned down 130 complaints about a larger advertisement that poked fun at drought conditions in Africa.

The Posters Lee advert showed a Bushman walking in barren fields before digging for a frog he planned to squeeze for moisture. The man's son, instead of pursuing such traditional ways of getting a drink, is seen going in a bar and getting a beer from a refrigerator. The complainants felt it was distasteful to treat drought and famine comically to sell beer. Some also felt the depiction of the old Bushman digging for a frog would encourage racist attitudes.

But the Independent Television Commission said most viewers would see the advertisement as a light-hearted pastiche and did not believe it would encourage racist beliefs.

— Paul McCann,
Media Correspondent

Baby Rebecca Jarrett was a surprise delivery for her parents Stephen and Deborah. For she is the first girl born into the family from Shrewsbury, Shropshire for more than a century. Mr Jarrett, 28, said: "We've lost count of the number of boys. But we know there hasn't been a girl for at least 125 years and it could be 140 years."

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Mr Tomlinson was not alone. He had to have "excellent knowledge of the workings of the Internet" it was feared that he was "going to be able to publish in that medium," she said.

Outside the court, Mr Tomlinson's solicitor, John Wainwright, said: "My client has a legitimate grievance against the Intelligence Service and has never been able to present it in an independent way or court. It is what he has been trying to do all along."

Green Amendment lawyers repeated on the *Spectator* website that Peter Wright, a former MI5 assistant director, was a "well-known" published figure in 1987.


Crowguards were out yesterday that a straggler was safely back in the cage. The 45th female Meerkat was found hunched on iron mudflats at a beach near Heli.

But with a strong gust of wind, the straggler was blown over the side of the boat. The crowguard took her when she was still in the water and brought her back on a small boat. The crowguard was then taken back to the cage.

As the 1990s progress, just as we are getting a glimpse of the new era, we are also beginning to see the challenges of the new century. The challenges of the 1990s are not just the challenges of the 1980s, but the challenges of the 21st century. The challenges of the 1990s are not just the challenges of the 1980s, but the challenges of the 21st century. The challenges of the 1990s are not just the challenges of the 1980s, but the challenges of the 21st century.

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8/EUROPEAN NEWS

Bank arrest fuels Belgian scandals

The latest in a string of bizarre Belgian scandals broke yesterday with the sensational revelation that the head of one of the biggest bank corporations in the Benelux area has been charged with criminal conspiracy and tax fraud on a massive scale.

Katherine Butler reports from Brussels.

Damien Wigny, 55-year-old chairman of KB-Lux, the Luxembourg sister company of Belgium's Kredietbank, was arrested at the weekend for alleged collusion with Rita Verstraeten, a tobacco heiress already facing charges of defrauding the tax authorities in the tune of 2 billion Belgian Francs - about £34m.

Mr Wigny, the son of Baroo Pierre Wigny, a former Belgian justice minister, is officially a resident of Luxembourg. He was picked up on Saturday when he returned from the Grand Duchy to spend All Souls Day, a public holiday and a traditional family occasion, with relatives in Belgium.

Belgian police had staked out the family residence at Perwez-Eghezee.

Investigating magistrates who have been following the money trail in the Verstraeten case for months believe Mr Wigny orchestrated a massive tax fraud scam. He is being held for suspected money laundering and on suspicion of heading a criminal conspiracy to defraud the tax authorities.

Jean-Claude Leys, the judge leading the investigation, said Mr Wigny is believed to have personally assisted Rita Verstraeten, a former hairdresser, to launder billions she inherited from cigarette magnate Roger Gosset in 1991 in a secret Luxembourg account.

The arrest will provoke renewed criticism of Luxembourg as a tax haven. The Grand Duchy is under intense pressure from other EU governments to bring its bank secrecy and taxation laws into line. But it has also shaken the powerful Belgo-Luxembourg banking world to the core. KB-Lux was being monitored closely by the Belgian tax and judicial authorities for at least three years. Up to 300 accounts held by Belgians in the Luxembourg bank have been investigated on suspicion of tax fraud.



Multi-storey parking: Cars swept on top of one another in Camas, southern Spain, after a night of torrential rain caused widespread flooding and damage across the Iberian peninsula. Photograph: AP

Britain honours Soviet military hero - 50 years late

George Robertson, the Secretary of State for Defence, flew to Moscow last night to seal agreements for closer defence co-operation with Russia, and - more than 50 years late - bestow a special British honour on one of the Soviet Union's greatest military heroes.

In a round of meetings today, Mr Robertson and top Russian officials, including his opposite number Igor Sergeyev

and the Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, are expected to give the go-ahead for a new joint commission to handle defence initiatives between the two countries.

They will also clear the way for joint naval exercises between the Royal Navy and the Russian fleet designed to help them to work together on peace-keeping and humanitarian missions around the world.

The sentimental highpoint of his short

visit, however, will be the presentation of an honorary knighthood to the widow of Ivan Konev, the Soviet marshal who defeated the Germans in the great 1943 tank battle of Kursk and shared in the capture of Berlin two years later. He was one of three Soviet commanders given an honorary knighthood by King George VI, but the award was never presented because the Cold War then turned allies into foes.

Good intentions at Balkans summit

Protagonists in some of the Balkans' bloodiest and most ancient feuds began a first ever regional summit yesterday with a flurry of signals of peace and reconciliation - but with no guarantee that these would translate into a lasting outbreak of brotherhood between them.

Opening the two-day encounter in Iraklion, Crete, the Greek Prime Minister, Costas Simitis, urged his colleagues to "overcome the past and define our future together", while Mesut Yilmaz of Turkey, Greece's sworn foe, spoke of the need to "leave behind nationalism and animosity" so that the Balkans could shed its bloody image once and for all.

The first decisions of the summit built on these good intentions included an agreement to build a second such gathering in Turkey in 1998, as well as regular ministerial meetings and a concerted effort to reduce trade barriers. But the very structure of the meeting pointed to the practical difficulties ahead.

The summit has no agenda, because none could be agreed. The leaders of Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Yugoslavia and Macedonia were present. But Croatia and Slovenia ignored the gathering, while Bosnia, ripped apart by

conflict between 1992 and 1995, was represented by a deputy foreign minister.

Its success will be measured at least as much by two bilateral meetings on the summit sidelines as by what happens in the plenary sessions.

In the first, the Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic, was discussing with the Albanian Prime Minister, Fatos Nano, the worsening tensions in Kosovo province, where the anger of the ethnic Albanian majority at Mr Milosevic's policies appears about to explode.

Last night, meanwhile, Mr Yilmaz and Mr Simitis met for the first Greco-Turkish summit on Greek soil in nine years, in the hope of reducing frictions over Cyprus and the eastern Aegean. After some conciliatory remarks by the Turkish Foreign Minister, Ismail Cem, diplomats nourished cautious hopes last night that at least the non-aggression pact brokered by the US at July's Nato summit in Spain could be revived.

Since then, matters have gone from bad to worse, culminating in October's reciprocal buzzing of planes carrying the two countries' Defence Ministers to and from visits to the Greek and Turkish portions of Cyprus. — Rupert Cornwell

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Kremlin delay on fate of last tsar

A Russian government commission decided to delay until January making a recommendation on what to do with the bones of the last tsar, Nicholas II, and his family. The remains of Nicholas II, Empress Alexandra and their children were dug up six years ago near Ekaterinburg, where they were shot by Bolshevik revolutionaries in 1918. They are kept in cases under lock and key in Ekaterinburg morgue.

"Our scientists ... reported today a certainty of 99.9 per cent that these are the remains of Nicholas II, the tsarina and the children," the First Deputy Prime Minister, Boris Nemtsov, said. "But we need the less need to carry out ... a small additional test that will take about two months."

— Reuters, Moscow

The write stuff

Dominiq Nguez won the Femina literary prize for *L'Amour Noir*, about the suffering that comes with love, and Philippe Le Guillou earned the Medice prize for *Les Sept Noms du Peintre* describing the life of a contemporary artist. The awards mark the opening of France's annual prize season, which crowns the best literary works in various categories.

AP - Paris

Cleric suspended over Jew remark

The Roman Catholic archbishop of Gdansk suspended a prominent priest who said Jews should have no place in Poland's government. Archbishop Tadeusz Goculowski said Henryk Jankowski would be allowed to resume his job as a parish priest if he showed he had learned a lesson during the year-long suspension.

Fr Jankowski effectively served as a chaplain to Solidarity after it arose in Gdansk's shipyard in 1980 as the Soviet bloc's first free trade union.

Reuters - Gdansk

Trial told of torture

One of 19 ethnic Albanians on trial in Serbia's Kosovo province testified yesterday, describing torture inflicted on him by Serb police and undressing in court to show traces of the beatings.

Nait Hasani, a Kosovo student charged with terrorism and separatism, is considered the key figure in the trial. Mr Hasani, who was arrested in late January, is suspected of leading a shadowy paramilitary group called the Kosovo Liberation Army, which is striving for the province's independence from Serbia.

AP - Pristina

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Iraq threatens to turn its guns on US spy planes

Saddam Hussein yesterday warned that he might shoot down US U-2 spy planes that are on loan to the UN and flying over Iraq in support of UN weapons inspectors. Patrick Cockburn reports on the latest raising of the stakes in the Iraqi President's battle to divide the coalition ranged against him.

Arah sources said the Iraqi Ambassador to the UN, Nizar Hamdani, sent a letter last weekend to chief weapons inspector Richard Butler warning him that Iraqi forces were on alert for a possible US air strike.

The letter warned Butler that he must assume responsibility for authorising surveillance flights "especially in the circumstances in which our anti-aircraft artillery is open everywhere in anticipation of possible aggression," the sources said.

The US Ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson, called the Iraqi threat an "irresponsible escalation" of the crisis, and a threat

to escalate the confrontation into a military showdown.

"This is a direct threat on the United Nations," Mr Richardson told reporters following a meeting at UN headquarters. "A direct military threat to the United Nations."

Earlier, President Saddam called for dialogue to resolve the stand-off, the official Iraqi news agency (INA) said. He said Iraq wanted "a clear and complete picture" of when the UN would lift all of its sanctions against Iraq.

Speaking of the UN inspectors, he added: "If they have a question here or there, these questions and explanation have lasted for seven years and maybe they will last more... the hulk of them are silly and provocative." Iraq has already prevented three US inspectors from entering the country from Bahrain.

In the hope of defusing the crisis, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, is sending a team to Iraq.

Newt Gingrich, the House Speaker, said the message must be sent "that the United States will take whatever steps are necessary to enforce an ability to inspect". He said that "absolutely" included military strikes.

New Zealand's 'Thatcher' takes over from Bolger

New Zealand's long-serving Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, announced yesterday that he would resign. The country will have its first woman PM, Jenny Shipley, who has been called a New Zealand version of Margaret Thatcher. David Barber in Wellington says the change in leadership will mean a turn to the right.

Jim Bolger, 62, leader of the conservative National Party since 1986 and Prime Minister for the last seven years, announced he would step down later this month after Jenny Shipley told him he had lost the support of a majority of his MPs.

Mrs Shipley, 45, Minister of Transport and Women's Affairs, is a tough politician who has been likened to former British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher. As Social Welfare Minister in 1990 she presided over wide-ranging cuts in benefits of up to 25 per cent. As Minister of Health from 1993 she introduced disastrously unpopular health reforms which remain the biggest problem for the government in voters' eyes.

After refusing all day to go, Mr Bolger issued a late night statement saying "changing circumstances make it appropriate for me to step down as Prime Minister".

He said he was signalling his intention to retire now to permit an orderly transition for the National Party's coalition gov-



Right turn: Jenny Shipley steps into Jim Bolger's place



Photographs: Reuters

ernment with Winston Peters' populist New Zealand First party.

But there was widespread speculation that as Prime Minister, Mrs Shipley would end the 11-month-old formal coalition which has become one of the country's most unpopular governments ever; it scored a 90 per cent disapproval rating in a recent poll.

Although NZ First's 17 MPs give the coalition a single seat majority in Parliament, analysts predicted Mrs Shipley could dump Mr Peters, who is Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer, and run a minority government with the support of a handful of disaffected NZ First MPs, the eight representatives of the right-wing ACT NZ party (formerly the Association of Consumers

and Taxpayers) and the lone United NZ MP, Peter Dunne.

Mr Peters, once the country's most popular politician, attracted an 88 per cent unfavourable rating in a recent poll of voters and is blamed by many National Party backbenchers for the government's unpopularity.

Mrs Shipley indicated that Mr Peters did not figure in her future plans when she did not consult him on her move, merely informing him this morning that she had the numbers to oust Mr Bolger. Support for NZ First, which won 13 per cent of the vote at the election in October last year, has slipped to 2 per cent in opinion polls.

A leadership bid by Mrs Shipley has long been on the cards as the polls showed support for the coalition dwindling. A poll last month indicated the main opposition Labour Party, led by Helen Clark, would romp home in an immediate election.

But the timing of Mrs Shipley's challenge stunned political analysts who had not expected her to move until the New Year. The plot to oust Mr Bolger quickly was apparently hatched over the last two weeks while he and his party deputy, Foreign Minister Don McKinnon, were overseas attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Edinburgh and making a state visit to France.

Mr Bolger is seen by many in the National Party to have been too soft with his big-spending coalition partners in New Zealand First at the cost of National's traditional right-wing policies and fiscal restraint. Mrs Shipley has never been accused of being too soft on anyone.

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Economic crisis forces Thai Prime Minister to quit

Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, Thailand's embattled Prime Minister, has announced he is stepping down from office after just 11 months. During that time, Thailand has entered its worst economic crisis for decades. As *Matthew Chance* writes from Bangkok, the PM has been shouldering much of the blame.

It was the announcement many Thais have been waiting for. After months of deepening economic hardship, provoking heated street demonstrations in

Bangkok over recent weeks, Mr Chavalit could wait no longer to end the months of speculation over his future.

"I think it is time to open a chance for another person to work. The country will have a new government, and new people to serve in it," he told reporters.

Nationwide radio and television quoted the Prime Minister as saying that he would remain in office at least until tomorrow, before seeking the approval of King Bhumibol, as the Thai constitution requires. In the meantime, perhaps in a bid to salvage something from the crisis of his administration, Mr Chavalit says he will see through some of the key items of financial legislation. There is no escaping the fact

that at the end of his short, 11-month administration, Thailand's once dynamic "Asian tiger" economy lies in disarray. The country's banking and property sectors, once booming and lucrative, have stagnated, seeding Thailand's finances plummeting. No less than 58 Thai financial companies, hurried in billions of pounds worth of debt, have been suspended from operations. And since July, a financial crisis has seen the currency, the baht, lose half its value.

An emergency rescue package for Thailand, brokered by the International Monetary Fund three months ago, worth more than 10 billion pounds, restored some confidence in the embattled Thai economy. But Thailand's failure to act quickly

to implement much-needed financial cut-backs has heightened suspicions amongst investors that the government is complacent about economic reform. And the local press, the public at large, even members of his own government have repeatedly named the Prime Minister as the man to blame above all others.

The exit of Mr Chavalit from power may not be the complete solution to Thailand's economic woes. In his announcement, the Prime Minister made no mention of who was to succeed him, or what form the new government would take. And there is concern that confusion might replace the chaos of the Chavalit government, and a change at the top might delay serious economic reform.

Afghanistan breakthrough

The Taliban and its opponents moved closer to the negotiating table, a senior UN official said yesterday. The breakthrough came last week when former communist general and ethnic-Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum released as many as 200 Taliban prisoners being held in northern Afghanistan. The Taliban has responded by accepting a list from Mr Dostum of as many as 200 men apparently being held by the Taliban.

—AP, Islamabad

Push to delay Kenyan poll

A prominent Kenyan politician who helped father a cross-party reform package argued for the delay of elections and a government of national unity. George Anyoo said presidential and parliamentary elections could be held as late as next April. The revised reading of the constitution is that the elections must be held and the results declared before President Daniel arap Moi's term expires on 3 January.

—Reuters, Nairobi

Director's death halts film

Production of an Indian-made movie thriller about Kashmiri terrorists has stalled following the death of its director in India. Mukul Anand, 46, under stress because of violence surrounding India's film industry, died in September of a heart attack. His death came shortly after he flew back from Utah, where he had been filming near Salt Lake City. Anand's name had reportedly appeared recently on a list of Indian filmmakers targeted by the underworld.

—AP, Salt Lake City

Memorial to Laika

Russian space scientists unveiled a plaque yesterday to mark the 40th anniversary of the first living creature sent into space - Laika, a mongrel dog. Laika, a stray found on the streets of Moscow, literally rocketed to fame aboard a Soviet space ship on 3 November 1957. She burned up along with the satellite as it returned to the Earth's atmosphere.

—AP, Moscow

Suicides reopen paedophile row in New South Wales

An apparent suicide pact by three Australian youth workers being investigated over an alleged paedophile ring has reopened an outcry over the sexual abuse of children. Two of the men died after apparently gassing themselves in a car near Brisbane, Queensland. A third man was critically ill and in hospital.

They worked in northern New South Wales with homeless and destitute children. One worked for the state's department of health in Armidale, in the New England district, where officers from the state's child-protection enforcement agency raided houses last week and seized what was described as child pornography.

Two of the men in the car were arrested during the raids and charged with indecent assault and homosexual intercourse with a child aged between 10 and 16. Police are believed to be looking for four other men after allegations that a dozen minors in the New England district were sexually abused.

The disclosures come after a year of publicity, allegations and inquiries into paedophile activity. A royal commission of inquiry headed by James Wood, a former judge, covered alleged protection of paedophiles by police. Seven witnesses committed suicide, including a former Supreme Court judge and two policemen. Mr Wood's report led to a police shake-up, and several charges being laid over child sexual abuse.

A fortnight ago Franca Arena, a Labor MP in the New South Wales parliament and campaigner against child abuse, said Bob Carr, the state premier, and Peter Collier, the opposition leader, conspired with Mr Wood to conceal names of people in high places allegedly involved in paedophile activities.

All three denied the allegation. Mr Carr appointed another inquiry into Mrs Arena's charges, before which she declined to appear, and its report next week is expected to condemn her.

—Robert Milliken, Sydney

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11/RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY
4 NOVEMBER 1997

The Party's over, but the memories still live on



Hard times: An old woman barely able to beg in Moscow yesterday. Life for many Russians has got steadily worse since the end of the Soviet era, and for some (right) the past inspires not hatred but nostalgia

Photographs: AP

This week marks the 80th anniversary of Russia's October Revolution, an event which heralded some of history's sorriest episodes. Yet Russians are increasingly ambivalent about their past.

As Phil Reeves reports, *Homo Sovieticus* has found a habitat in post-Communist Russia.

The picture showed a strapping, blonde Slavic-looking woman striding through a field brimming with wheat on her way to another joyful day labouring in the fields for the good of the people.

The camera cuts to another image, a painting of Joseph Stalin, his chest inflated with patriotic pride. And then, to a third: another heroic portrait of the dictator, looking resolute but avuncular.

For a moment, the clock seemed to have spun back half a century. But then Boris Yeltsin appeared on screen. It was the first day's broadcasting of Kultura (Culture) TV, a new state-run channel launched on Saturday, on the president's orders, to promote Russian art and traditions in the face of a tidal wave of Western pop culture. At last, he said, Russians could seriously discuss spiritual values, their morality, their heritage.

To be fair, the Stalin portraits were only a few minutes of a day devoted to wall-to-wall films, ballet, and a concert by the three tenors, Domingo, Pavarotti and Carreras.

Yet the implication, underlined by endless interviews with ex-Soviet "people's artists", was clear. The Party, literally, is over, but the Soviet Union's achievements have a place in today's Russia.

Or at least, for some. The 80th anniversary of the Revolution on Friday will reveal that Russia is suffering from a deepening identity crisis, bought about by both an ideological vacuum that has followed the end of Communism and the genuine fear of a Slavic people which, with its population plunging, feels painfully under threat.

Two motions drawn up in parliament last week revealed its contours. One, authored by the dominant Communists, congratulated the nation on the 80th anniversary, and declared that the ideals "for which the older generations selflessly fought remain alive in the hearts of millions of countrymen". (It passed.) The other, from an independent, called for the revolution to be condemned as "a coup that established a totalitarian regime in the country based on mass terror". (It failed.)

Russia's ambivalence about its history was even more evident on Thursday, remembrance day for the victims of political persecution. Given the scale of suffering - the slaughter of millions by Lenin and Stalin, the deportation of entire nations, the labour camps, the repression of Jews, intellectuals, dissidents - one might expect such an occasion to bring the country to a stunned, horrified, halt. It didn't.

There were a few ceremonies. Some 400 people visited a forest outside St Petersburg, the site of a mass grave for vic-

tims of Stalin's Great Terror in 1936-37. Yet the turn-out was tiny, when compared with the 46,000 people believed to have been buried there by the NKVD, forerunners to the KGB.

"We must admit that we have lost the fervour with which we denounced the political butchers in the early 1990s and the sympathy we felt for the victims of the Bolshevik regime," said the newspaper *Russkoye Vesti*. "We tend to repeat the phrase which was popular in Brezhnev's time: the persecution campaigns were evil, but not everything was black or white."

The staff of Russia's parliament, the State Duma, went one step further. On the same day, they held a concert and lavish awards ceremony to honour those who stormed the Ostankino television centre in Moscow an attempt to unseat Boris Yeltsin during his stand-off with parliament in 1993. To many liberal eyes, this was tantamount to honouring a band of hardline Soviet reactionaries.

The absence of any mass sense of outrage about the past flaws has multiple roots. Russia's historical memory has been warped by decades of Soviet propaganda and censorship, and by a weary disillusionment with the new society (and its western friends). The rest of the world perceived the end of the Soviet Empire as a distinct punctuation mark, a reading between the past and the future. But for the majority of Russians, especially those outside larger cities, life has continued seamlessly, usually getting worse.

Homo Sovieticus is still at large all around them. They still need a residence permit to live in Moscow (despite the constitutional guarantee of freedom of movement). In the provinces, the security services still pry, supporting governments which are run by the old Communist-era apparatchiks. The courts are often unfair; the prisons, filthy; the police, brutal.

Despite Mr Yeltsin's efforts to introduce enabling laws it is usually impossible to buy land. The shops are basic. And Russia's genuine triumphs - free speech, the right to travel abroad - mean little to the economically dispossessed. Promises of reform have not materialised. So why should they reject the past, an era that inspires not hatred but nostalgia?

Nor is this phenomenon confined to the impoverished, the majority who have gained nothing from the privatisation of 70 per cent of Russia's economy. *Homo Sovieticus* has also spawned a modern, cosmopolitan successor who moves cheerfully amid the banks, boutiques and glittering new malls of Moscow.

Less Soviet than Russian patriot, he believes in capitalism combined with state interventionism (and lots of foreign investment), including state-owned land. He runs his fiefdom with an iron rod, helped by his security forces; he has some distinct imperialist markings, such as a conviction that Sevastopol in Ukraine should be returned to Russia.

Like the Soviets, he enjoys erecting enormous monuments - for instance, to the triumph over the Nazis, and to Peter the Great. He believes in the cult of the personality, and is constantly seeking the national limelight. His name is Yuri Luzhkov, Moscow's mayor. And he is perhaps the strongest contender to be the next president of this vast land.

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Tories play safe with mumsy Euro-sceptic in Beckenham

Jacqui Lait has a disarming answer to the Piers Merchant 'problem'. She tells Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, she's too 'motherly' to be involved in a sex scandal.

"I don't look like someone who is going to get involved in sleaze," said Jacqui Lait, the Tory candidate in the Beckenham by-election. Pressed to say what she meant, Ms Lait - she is happily married - said: "It's not my style. Someone said I had been described in the press as motherly. I don't mind that."

Being described as "motherly" is hardly a problem for Ms Lait, who is fighting a seat vacated by the former Tory MP Piers Merchant, who resigned after being video-recorded in bed with an ex-hostess.

Ms Lait's biggest problem at the moment is fighting shy of the accusation that she is pro-European, and a "Kennite", a member of the Ken Clarke tendency.

A former chairman of the European Union of Women (British Section) who lists



Europe among her interests, she is suspiciously Europhile for some Tory MPs.

However, when pressed on the issue, she is resolutely behind the new leader, William Hague, in rejecting the arguments of Mr Clarke and his friends on the single currency.

As a former Parliamentary Private Secretary to Mr Hague, she says she has no hesitation in supporting her party leader's line ruling out entry to the single currency in the next Parliament.

She also denies going through a conversion to Euro-scepticism. "I have always been deeply sceptical of the practicalities of the single currency," she said.

Ms Lait was the MP for Hastings and Rye, a seat she lost at the last election, and the first woman into the Tory whip's office.

She dissociates herself from the campaign against the leader being run by the former Chancellor and his friends over Europe. "It is crazy. On the whole, the thing is just not an issue." At her selection conference, Ms Lait told the Beckenham Tories that Europe was not an issue in the sense that the Tories were in government. Ms Lait, who lists her recreations as walking, swim-

ming, theatre, food and wine, told the local party she would fight the by-election on local issues, including education and health.

Mr Clarke's friends privately said they were worried at being blamed for a set-back in the by-election. It is being held on 20 November, the same day as polling in the Winchester by-election, where Gerry Malone, the former minister, has a re-run after successfully appealing against a Liberal Democrat victory on grounds of irregularities at the general election.

Gerry Malone (right) campaigning in Winchester with Peter Lilley
Photograph: Andrew Bauman

Ms Lait said she lost the Hastings seat due to demographic changes. Mr Merchant had a majority of 4,953 over Labour on 1 May. The aim of a short three-week campaign is to give Labour little time to organise, but the timing of the campaign, after the let-down by the MP's private life, leaves Ms Lait facing a possible backlash in the midst of the most serious Tory split since the divisions over free trade.

Press freedom to rest in hands of judges

The Lord Chancellor conceded yesterday it was "very likely" that judges would apply their own law on press privacy. Michael Streeter and Colin Brown look at press freedom and the Royal Family.

Lord Irvine. He said he saw no prospect of late-night injunctions disrupting newspaper publication "if the press have solid grounds for maintaining that there is a public interest in publishing".

The Lord Chancellor went on to confirm ministers' backing for media self-regulation, saying: "The Government is not introducing a privacy statute. It has resisted demands that it should."

Legal experts have already predicted a judge-made law of privacy, but they suggest judges will pay similar attention to the right of freedom of expression - also enshrined in the Convention.

A Downing Street source dismissed as "bizarre, eccentric 24-carat lish" a report that Sir Robert had intervened. The source added: "I think someone is out to get Robert Fellowes." Buckingham Palace was also forthright in its denial of the report as "completely without foundation".

A Palace spokesman said: "At no stage has the Palace tried, either publicly or privately, to seek special treatment on behalf of the Queen and members of the Royal Family."

For the Conservatives, Lord Kingsland confirmed they would not vote against the Bill. But he stressed: "If this Bill goes on the statute book it will have a clear and defining influence on the balance of power between the legislature and the judiciary."

He said he supported the terms of the Convention "wholeheartedly" but he was concerned about its effects on existing British legislation.

The human rights lawyer, Lord Lester of Heme Hill QC, called for "some genuinely independent authority", ideally the Press Complaints Commission, to maintain the sensitive balance between free speech and personal privacy. "If that happens, then the development of a right of privacy... will not lead, normally, to judicial intervention against the media," said the Liberal Democrat peer.

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Hagu line o cabin

A purge of Tory dissidents was urged by Hague yesterday in a compromise on the new Conservative Party report on the economy created by the European currency.

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Hague takes firm line on shadow cabinet dissidents

A purge of Tory frontbench dissidents was urged by William Hague yesterday. With no compromise or quarter offered by the new Conservative leader, Stephen Goodwin and Anthony Bevis report on the continuing tremors created by the European single currency.

Mr Hague yesterday offered his party the firm smack of leadership, with a warning that the party would oppose next week's second reading of the Amsterdam Treaty, and that any frontbenchers who could not swallow his Euro-sceptic line should resign now, rather than generate continuing tension.

On a brief campaign visit to the Paisley by-election campaign, Mr Hague said: "It's always disappointing when somebody resigns, but it is better they resign if they have a genuine disagreement with the leader of the party than if we try to cover it up indefinitely and always have the tension that brings."

As for next Tuesday's Commons vote on the Amsterdam Treaty - the next big bone of contention with his own pro-European dissidents - Mr Hague said: "I don't think we should have too much difficulty on that, if everybody remembers what they campaigned on in the general election."

But in a warning of continuing conflict ahead, Kenneth Clarke suggested that if the Shadow Cabinet wanted to perform a head-stand on the single currency, it must not expect him to follow suit.

Mr Clarke, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, told a British travel agents' convention in Tenerife: "Now we have a government that is saying 'Let's wait a little longer', and an Opposition that is saying 'Let's wait - and wait.'"

However, in a stark condemnation of the new stance taken by Mr Hague and his colleagues, he added: "If the Shadow Cabinet suddenly wants to change the policy of the Conservative Party for the last 30 years, it can't conceivably imagine that people who've been in office for years and years, taking a different view, were going to agree."

The political pit-falls threatened by the single currency spread to the Government yesterday, when ministers were again warned that Britain would have to re-join the Exchange Rate Mechanism before entering the euro currency.

Probationary membership of the ERM has already been ruled out by both the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, although the Governor of the Bank of England suggested yesterday that Britain might have to shadow the tax policies of "euroland" before going into the single currency.

The Prime Minister's office said it was no longer a matter of "cast-iron necessity" to join the Exchange Rate Mechanism before joining the single currency, as laid by the Maastricht Treaty.

Hans Teitmeyer, President of the German Bundesbank, said in Aachen, Germany, said that if countries did not join the first wave of the currency in 1999, they would have to belong to the ERM for two years to become eligible for subsequent single currency membership.

"If they want to join later, the UK must have participated in the Exchange Rate Mechanism for two years," Mr Teitmeyer said.

More ominously for the Government, Patrick Child, spokesman for the European Union Commissioner for monetary union, Yves-Thibault de Silguy, said: "The Commission's view and the view of the majority of other member states is that one of the conditions for participation in EMU is prior membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism."

"One of the criteria [in the Treaty] requires observance of the normal fluctuation margins of the ERM of the European Monetary System without severe tension. The treaty text is clear."

David Heathcoat-Amory, a Conservative Treasury spokesman, said that Mr Brown had been given a humiliating slap-down.

"Mr Brown must explain what action he will take if he fails to win a waiver of the Maastricht Treaty's requirement," he said. "Otherwise, there will be a growing suspicion that his week-old Economic and Monetary Union Policy is already falling apart at the seams."



Window dressing: Three store assistants wave to William Hague during the Conservative Party leader's brief walkabout in Paisley yesterday. Photograph: Martin Gilfeather/Photovews

Britain to host conference for applicants for EU membership

Robin Cook promises that when it holds the EU presidency, Britain will foster a partnership between European Union applicants and existing members, writes Alan Murdoch in Dublin.

giving the EU presidency an "impartial" chair. After the talks he had separate meetings with Bertie Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister, and David Andrews the Foreign Minister, and said that he had encountered "an understanding of our position on the single currency" while in Dublin.

"The talks underline the extent to which Britain and Ireland are good friends and working partners," he said.

"I do not believe there will be any problem with Britain in acting as president of the EU in relation to the single currency."

Mr Cook also reported "a very strong welcome and support" in Dublin for Britain's initiative on human rights.

"Ireland is one of the countries closest to us in the European Union with a common agenda. During this visit, we have identified a lot of common ground," he said.

Mr Cook also discussed the Northern Ireland peace process with Mr Andrews and said he assured him that the British government was strongly committed to making it a success.

But he refused to be drawn on the consequences of last week's election of the Belfast-based law professor and self-confessed nationalist, Mary McAleese, as the new President of Ireland.

He said only: "I have congratulated the Irish people on the successful way in which they have shown the place for women in politics is at the top."

"Mary McAleese will, I am sure, be a very fitting successor to Mary Robinson, whose period as President of Ireland was so successful."

Britain will host a special European conference next year during its EU presidency to which all applicants for membership will be invited.

The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said it would encourage partnership between the EU and those applicant countries less likely to be admitted in the next intake.

Mr Cook reminded the Institute of European Affairs in Dublin that several were applicants to both Nato and the EU. The conference would reduce the risk of those not being admitted to the EU feeling snubbed. "Our own view is that Turkey should be invited to that conference," he said.

He said Britain's priorities during the presidency would be action on crime, jobs and the environment, and developing an EU code of conduct on arms exports. He also promised to use Britain's own experience to ensure liberalisation of the EU telecommunications markets, due on 1 January, "is effective and on time".

Britain's term will involve overseeing which countries qualify for the third stage of economic and monetary union. He claimed Britain's delayed EMU entry timetable could be an advantage by

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Music taught to dwindling band of school pupils

The number of children learning a musical instrument has slumped by around 120,000 compared with three years ago - the equivalent of 1,500 bands - says a new report.

Judith Judd, Education Editor, looks at Britain's threatened school orchestras, and the reasons for the decline.

Government policy of delegating budgets to schools, so that they rather than local councils are responsible for music services, is partly to blame for the four per cent drop in children learning instruments, music education experts said yesterday.

Individual schools cannot afford the high cost of instruments or tuition, and it is uneconomic for them to fund teachers of minority instruments such as the bassoon.

Music teachers gathered in London to hear the findings from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, the leading music examinations body.

The Board told of teachers

being told to give ten-minute cello lessons to make money for tuition go further. Others were having to teach four children of different abilities different instruments during the same 40-minute lesson.

The survey of 3,000 children and adults found that almost all the decline in instrument playing was in families in the C1 and C2 social groups, those in clerical or junior managerial jobs and skilled manual workers.

The number of children who take instrumental lessons in schools is down from 87 to 79 per cent compared with the board's last survey three years ago.

Michael Wearne, chairman of the Federation of Music Services, said that £40 million had been cut from the service over the last four years and parental money was being sucked in to fill the breach.

"It is an invasive cancer of can't pay, can't play, spreading insidiously throughout the musical body. It is potentially catastrophic for the musical health of the country."

Around 17 million children and adults play instruments, and the percentage of adults who play is increasing after a big boost to school instrumental music in the 1970s and 1980s.

The present drop among



The proportion of school children studying musical instruments has dropped in three years from 87 per cent to 79 per cent

Photograph: Rui Xavier

five to 10-year-olds will leave the country bereft of orchestral players, according to Richard Morris, the associated board's chief executive.

If children had not started an instrument by the age of 11, they were unlikely to do so.

Music was like a pyramid with a wide base. Plenty of younger performers were needed

to sustain the people at the top, he argued. Orchestras are also being threatened by the decline in popularity of minority instruments such as oboes, French horns and bassoons.

By contrast, numbers playing the drums and the electric guitar are rising.

The decline in popularity of the piano continues, though

the percentage of those playing its rival, the electronic keyboard, is also down. More teachers are teaching the flute and the saxophone and the number of teachers for whom the piano is the main instrument is falling.

Roger Durston, chairman of the Music Education Council, pointed to evidence that chil-

dren's overall academic ability improved if they took part in musical activities.

"At a simple level, well motivated people gainfully occupied in playing musical instruments will almost certainly be good citizens, and form part of our attack on crime and the drug culture."

Mark Fisher, minister for the

arts, argued that the policy introduced by the last Government of devolving budgets to schools was generally popular. "But we need to identify specific problems which come with devolved budgets."

Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, plans to set up a fund for instrumental tuition using lottery money.

Hackney school hit squad upset

A government "hit squad" sent into a failing London education authority is being accused by councillors of confrontation-seeking and treating members and officers with contempt.

Conservative and Liberal Democrat members of Hackney Council will criticise the actions of the improvement team at an education committee meeting scheduled for tomorrow evening.

Local government leaders last night feared councillors could join with representatives of Hackney New Labour, a breakaway group expelled from the national Labour party, to reject recommendations made in the team's interim report, placing the council in confrontation with the Government.

The four-strong improvement team, sent into the authority by ministers in September, last week called for urgent action to appoint a director of education. Hackney was given two weeks to scrap its "fancy and trendy management structure".

The Tory and Lib-Dem motion attacked the "hit squad" for releasing its findings to the press before allowing council officers and members to see them.

"This is clearly an attempt to undermine the council's integrity and provoke confrontation", the resolution says. Despite the fact that "officers have co-operated and worked in partnership and offered every assistance to the Government's improvement team, they are now treating council officers and members with contempt", the motion concludes.

The motion was last night condemned by Graham Lane, chair of the Local Government Association's education committee. He said: "These people are bringing local government into disrepute. If they decide on a course of action to join Guy Fawkes and blow up the government they will see fireworks."

Conservative councillor Isaac Leibowitz, who moved the motion criticising the improvement team, last night said he had not yet read its report. He said: "We are concerned to take any steps which will improve education standards for the children of Hackney."

— Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

Teachers talk down plan for high fliers

A package of measures to improve teaching recruitment was recommended by a Commons committee. Judith Judd discusses plans to put bright graduates on a fast-track and to raise entry standards.

A fast stream for teachers, similar to Civil Service practice, would give high-flying graduates a stronger financial incentive to enter the profession, MPs on the Commons Education and Employment committee said. However, teacher unions attacked the proposal to separate excellent teachers from the rest and said that a few high-fliers would not solve the recruitment crisis.

Overall, the MPs' committee said, pay

was not a critical factor in teacher recruitment. According to international comparisons, it argued, teachers' starting salaries in the UK are "average" in relation to those for other jobs.

But members said that teachers' sometimes fell behind other professions after a time. To overcome this, fast-track entrants should move more quickly than others towards the Government's proposed "super-teacher" status or even to headship.

The committee's report made clear its fear that the Government's standards crusade might be threatened by teacher shortages. This year there was an 11 per cent drop in the numbers on undergraduate teaching courses. In maths, applications are down by 36 per cent over three years.

The committee recommended minimum A-level scores for entry. Members had been

shocked to discover A-level qualifications of students entering teacher training were on average about three grades lower than those for all undergraduate courses.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, said: "To say that pay is unimportant is ridiculous. And attracting a few high-fliers won't meet the Government's targets. We need well-qualified teachers in every classroom."

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "The committee has accurately put its finger on some of the main causes of teacher shortage, including excessive workload and poor working conditions. But I regret that the committee has been lured into invidious distinctions between so-called 'excellent teachers' and the rest."

Exclusion row head quits

The headteacher of a school which excluded a pupil for attacking academic standards has resigned days before the publication of a critical inspection report.

Nicola Aitkin yesterday announced she was stepping down to give Queen Elizabeth's Endowed School in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, "a fresh start".

Last July, a group of GCSE pupils told a local newspaper too little had been done to rectify failings, including high levels of staff absence, identified by the inspection service

Ofsted a year previously. One pupil, Sarah Briggs, 15, was permanently excluded after refusing to withdraw her criticisms and apologise, but was reinstated by governors during the summer holidays.

The row culminated in an intervention by the schools standards minister Stephen Byers, who ordered an inquiry. A team of Her Majesty's Inspectors will report later this year, while a separate report by Nottinghamshire County Council education inspectors, due out next week, is expected to identify weaknesses

throughout the 600-pupil school. Staff at the school protested at what they claimed was "intimidation" with a vote of no confidence last summer. Yesterday, the National Union of Teachers welcomed Mrs Aitkin's announcement, while Roger Kirk, of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, said he hoped the move would restore stability.

An experienced former Nottingham headteacher, John Round, has taken over as acting head.

— Lucy Ward

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15/AMERICA VOTES

Hackney
school
hit squad
upset

Oregon leads the way in battle over euthanasia

Americans go to the polling booths today. There are races for state and local offices but the votes on weighty social issues are probably more important in the long term. Mary Dejevsky looks at the question of euthanasia.

The eyes of many state governments will be on the north-western state of Oregon today when voters are asked, for the second time in three years, whether they want a law to permit "doctor-assisted suicide" - a highly regulated form of euthanasia.

Three years ago Oregon voted 51 per cent to 49 to allow doctors, in carefully defined circumstances, to help terminally ill patients die. It was the first state of the Union to introduce such a provision. Officially named the Death with Dignity Act, it permits someone with a terminal illness - defined as likely to result in death within six months - to solicit the help of a doctor to end his life.

There are numerous safeguards: the patient must be of sound mind, make his request in writing, consult two doctors, and wait 15 days. He may then receive a lethal drug dose, which he must administer himself, so the doctor bears no responsibility for causing death.

The law, however, has never been applied. It was challenged on constitutional grounds and judged to be of such importance that the case went to the Supreme Court for a ruling.

In June, in what was seen as a prelude to the Oregon judgment, the Supreme Court ruled in a separate case that there were no constitutional grounds for a federal ban on euthanasia, passing the decision back to the states. Last month, in its definitive verdict on the Oregon law, it dismissed an appeal by a lower court that would have rendered the law invalid. The Death with Dignity law had thus

surmounted all legal hurdles and was allowed to stand.

But by then the Oregon state legislature had decided to submit the law to a second referendum, which takes place today. This time, voters are to be asked not whether they want a Death with Dignity law, but whether they want to repeal it.

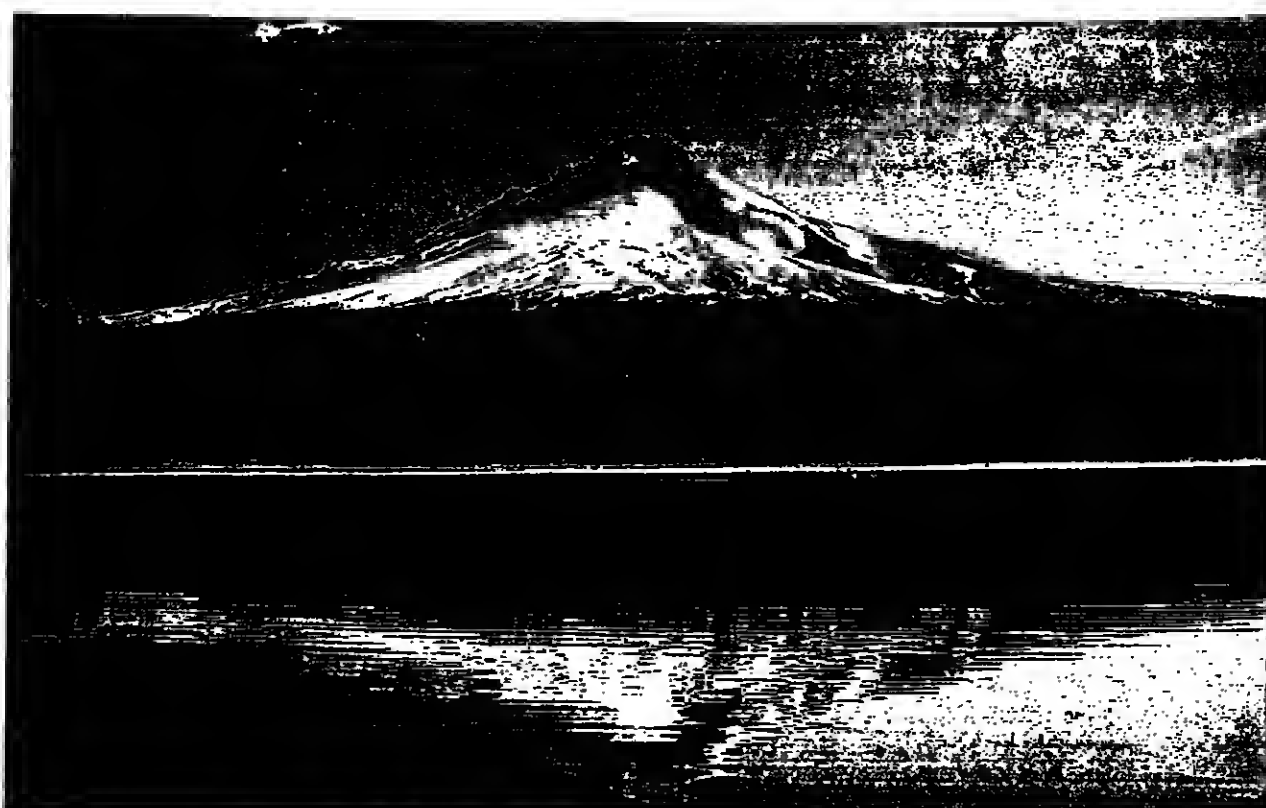
The result is seen as doubly telling. Not only will it show the state of opinion in Oregon on a controversial issue, it will also show whether opinion has shifted over the past three years, and what effect, if any, the previous referendum result may have had on public opinion.

One view is that voters were so scared by the implications of the law they had so narrowly approved that they would vote decisively to repeal it at the first opportunity. Others say voters so resented having their original decision called into question that the majority this time will be much greater. One survey, for local news agencies, indicated that the vote would be almost two to one to keep the law.

As polling day neared, the gap was thought to have narrowed as groups hostile to the law mobilised resources in a hard-hitting advertising campaign. With \$2m (£1.25m) at their disposal, compared to \$400,000 commanded by supporters of the law, anti-euthanasia groups are exposing what they see as the unacceptable risks and immorality of doctor-assisted suicide. More than half their funds have been raised by the Catholic Church.

One advert in the opposition's armoury shows a terminally ill teenager in a fit of depression 'dying a tortured death from the drugs prescribed to end his life - something the law's supporters say would be impossible under the law as framed.

Outside Oregon, there are now 20 states considering "right-to-die" legislation of their own, adding substance to the view of those who forecast that euthanasia could be to the next century what abortion was to this.



Moving the mountain: Oregon's progressive law may be followed by other states Photograph: Michael J Howell/Colorific

Taxing time for Republican governor who cut the costs

What do American voters want when their taxes have already been cut by a third? Answer: more tax cuts. That is the awful truth emerging from this year's two state-governor elections and it has grave implications for those aspiring to jump from local to national politics.

In New Jersey, Christine Todd Whitman, a Republican of exceptional pedigree and personal wealth, faces an unexpectedly close race for re-election because her opponent, Jim McGreevey, fired on two New Jersey gripes. Car insurance rates there are the highest in the US and property taxes are high too.

It was a bold decision by Mr McGreevey to attack Ms Whitman on tax. She snatched victory from the Democrat incumbent four years ago on a promise to cut state taxes by 30 per cent in three months. To the

astonishment of all, she did so with a month to spare and her example was quoted wherever Republicans gathered.

With the new governor's 30-per-cent reduction in their wallets, though, voters seemed simply to feel other taxes more keenly. Ms Whitman may explain coolly and calmly that the state governor has no control over car insurance rates (which are set by the companies) or local property taxes (which are set by counties) but the voters seem not to believe her.

Mr McGreevey, mayor of a city which coincidentally has raised property taxes, accuses Ms Whitman of being in the pocket of the insurance companies - and so not wanting to restrict increases in premiums. Her cuts in state tax, it is murmured, "have to come from somewhere" - so this is why property taxes have risen.

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LONG hospital waiting lists seem to be a fact of life these days. They're currently at their highest ever - over 12 million. And many of those waiting are having to spend weeks, months, even years with painful conditions - not knowing when their turn for treatment will come round.

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Texas referendum could kill off affirmative action

Electors in Houston, Texas are voting today for a new mayor. But they also have a referendum on their ballot papers - Proposition A - that would end the city's year-old policy of giving preference to women and ethnic minority candidates for city council jobs and contracts.

In the city itself, it is the mayoral election that is at the forefront of attention. The popular liberal mayor, Bob Lanier, has served as long as current regulations permit, and a black candidate - a former Houston and New York police chief - is favourite to succeed him.

Outside Houston, however, it is the referendum that is being watched. Will the largest city in Texas follow where California led a year ago and vote to abolish affirmative action, or could it block a growing white-led backlash against positive discrimination on grounds of sex and race?

One reason for the high level of outside interest is the number of states - from Florida in the south-east and Washington in the north-west - that are facing pressure to repeal affirmative action laws. Another reason is the fact that Houston, with a 2.5 million-strong population that is 33 per cent Hispanic, 26 per cent black and 35 per cent non-Hispanic white, closely approximates to the ethnic mix that is forecast for the United States as a whole by the second half of the next century, if demographic trends continue.

The poll is expected to be much closer than in California, because of the city's

racial composition, partly because of the popularity of the outgoing mayor who is campaigning against repeal. He is fronting adverts that say: "Let's not turn back the clock to the days when guy who looked like me got all the city's business." Some also think that with a black candidate standing for mayor, a larger than usual proportion of ethnic minority voters could turn out, which could tip the balance towards keeping affirmative action.

With the vote so close, the wording of the referendum itself became a controversy. Mayor Lanier replaced the words favoured by anti-affirmative action campaigners - which called on the city "not to discriminate against or grant preferential treatment to anyone on the basis of race, sex, colour, ethnicity or national origin" - with a question that asks whether Houston should amend its Charter "to end the use of preferential treatment (affirmative action)" in the city's employment and contracting.

This second version, which lacks the echoes of the Sixties civil rights movement, is thought to offer a better chance of retaining the status quo than the previous version. The change could also open the city to legal challenge from opponents of affirmative action, if the referendum fails. If it succeeds, that could spell the end of affirmative action across the US. If racially mixed Houston votes to end preferential treatment for minorities, the policy will be demonstrably unsustainable.

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PPP healthcare there to support you

Despite a wet summer, England and Wales remain gripped by drought.

One water company has even had to pump treated sewage effluent into one of its reservoirs, explains Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent.

The long running, on-off drought is definitely on again, says the Government's Environment Agency today in its latest drought report to John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for the Environment. Only 8 of the last 30 months have had above average rainfall in England and Wales.

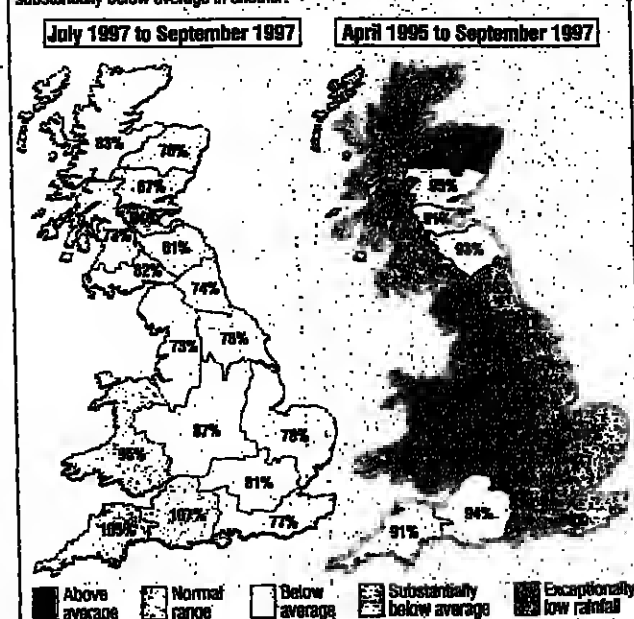
Shortages and hosepipe bans are likely next year unless something nearer to normal rainfall resumes over the winter.

"The South-east of England will face a very difficult summer if we do not get at least 75 per cent of normal winter rainfall," said Dr Geoff Mance, the agency's water management chief.

The drought is patchy. Partly this is because of the wet summer, with the well above average rainfall of May, June and August sharply cutting demand for garden watering. And after years of criticism, water companies have become more adept at coping with scarce resources.

Most of them are reporting that their reservoirs are actually fuller than they would normally be at this time of year, and levels are much higher than they were in October 1996 and 1995. Exceptions are in the Thames

The maps show how far rainfall has departed from the long-term average in different regions, in recent months and over the past two and a half years. A deficit which, statistically, represents exceptionally low rainfall in one region might only represent substantially below average in another.



works at Chelmsford and piped seven miles to a treatment plant, where ultra-violet light is used to disinfect it. Then it is mixed with water from the Chelmer and Blackwater Rivers, before being pumped into the company's Hanningfield Reservoir.

It only reaches the customers' taps after being filtered and chlorinated when the water leaves the reservoir.

The scheme has given the company an extra 20 million litres a day, equivalent to 5 per cent of its output of drinking water. Dr Roger Griffen, director of customer relations, said: "It's no different to what happens in a large number of rivers, and the water in the reservoir is just as good as it would always have been, if not better."

Several water companies take water from rivers downstream from sewage works. Dr Griffen claimed his company's scheme was fundamentally no different to this, apart from the effluent used by Essex and Suffolk being given the extra, ultraviolet disinfection treatment.

"On the whole our customers are taking it quietly, but there are some that are concerned and we're trying our hardest to give them confidence," said Dr. Griffen.

The agency is objecting to Anglian Water's bid to take extra water from the rivers Nene and Ouse to help refill two reservoirs.

The company is applying for drought orders which, if granted, would allow the rivers' flow to drop below the usual legal minimum from December to next May.

But the agency says Anglian cannot yet justify the harm this will do to the environment and other water users.

and Anglian regions. But September and October have had below average rainfall, giving a poor start to the key autumn and winter period when the nation's water resources are replenished. Across the country, from the south coast through East Anglia and up to the Scottish borders, groundwater in the aquifers remains at exceptionally low levels. Groundwater provides two-thirds of water supplies in South East England, half in East Anglia, and one-third in the Thames Valley, and the agency's report says water resources in these areas are "seriously balanced".

The Environment Agency has 35 "indicator" rivers whose flow is constantly measured. All but one of these is flowing at be-

low average levels for this time of year, and 23 are under half the average. Hosepipe and sprinkler bans are still relatively rare. The largest of these covers 1.7 million people and was imposed by the Essex and Suffolk Water Company last June.

Yesterday the firm, which covers parts of east London, Southend, Chelmsford, Lowestoft, Great Yarmouth and surrounding towns and villages, said it did not know when it could be lifted.

Some customers have been alarmed by the company's scheme for recycling sewage effluent into a reservoir, which went into operation last August. The treated effluent is taken from Anglian Water's sewage

The Bill to ban fox hunting to be published today looks imperilled after Downing Street said the Government would not provide it with government time to become law. The controversy will be increased today with the publication of the Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill, sponsored by the Labour MP Mike Foster, which will carry a penalty of a £5,000 fine or six months' imprisonment. In spite of making for hunting a criminal offence with a stiff penalty, the massive Labour majority will guarantee the Bill an overwhelming Commons majority for its second reading on 28 November.

It will get cross-party support, and the Tory MPs who will back the ban on hunting with dogs will be led by Ann Widdecombe, the former Home Office minister.

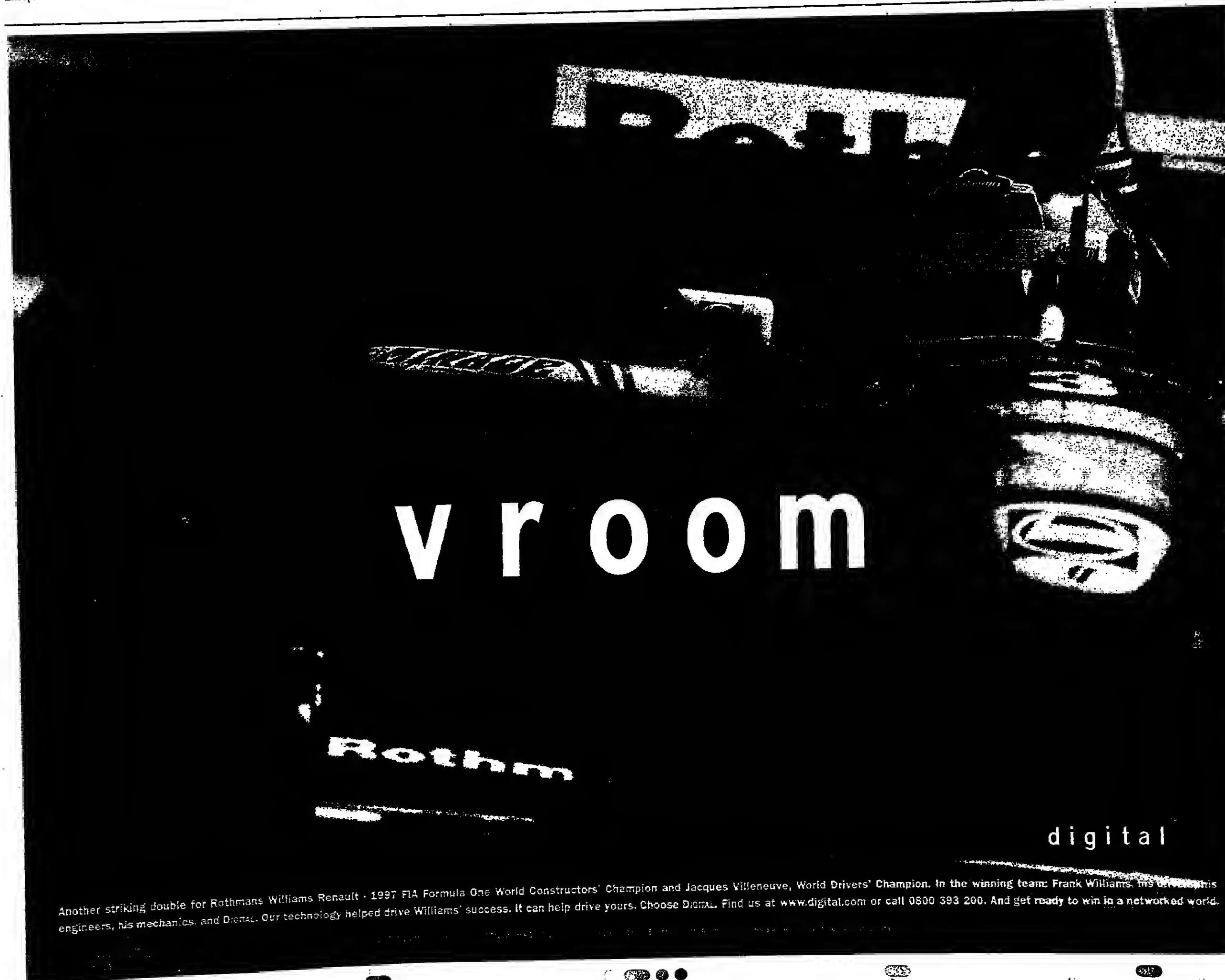
MPs are being inundated with letters in support of the Bill. Supporters claim around 30,000 letters have been sent to MPs to back the Bill.

But the opponents, who organised the mass rally of an estimated 100,000 supporters in Hyde Park in the summer, including William Hague, the Tory leader, are planning to kill the Bill by blocking it passage through the committee stage.

A Downing Street source said: "There will be a free vote and once that has happened, we have made clear it won't get government time. We have made it clear the Government has enough on its plate at the moment." An opinion poll published today shows most countryside dwellers are opposed to fox hunting. MORI found 57 per cent supported Mr Foster's Bill, and 32 per cent opposed it. Sixty per cent of rural people disagreed with the proposition that hunting with dogs is an important part of the British way of life.

Chief Political Correspondent
● Animal welfare activists kept up the pressure for a complete ban on the export of live animals for slaughter yesterday, handing in a 800,000-signature petition at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Dwindling support: Despite cross-party backing, the Bill to ban fox hunting faces a rough ride in the Commons
Photograph: Andrew Buurman



oh come

There's this annual exhibition, it's usually four artists in the thirties, it's chosen by judges who never argue in public. It's called the Turner Prize and what. See it for what it is, says Tom Lubner.

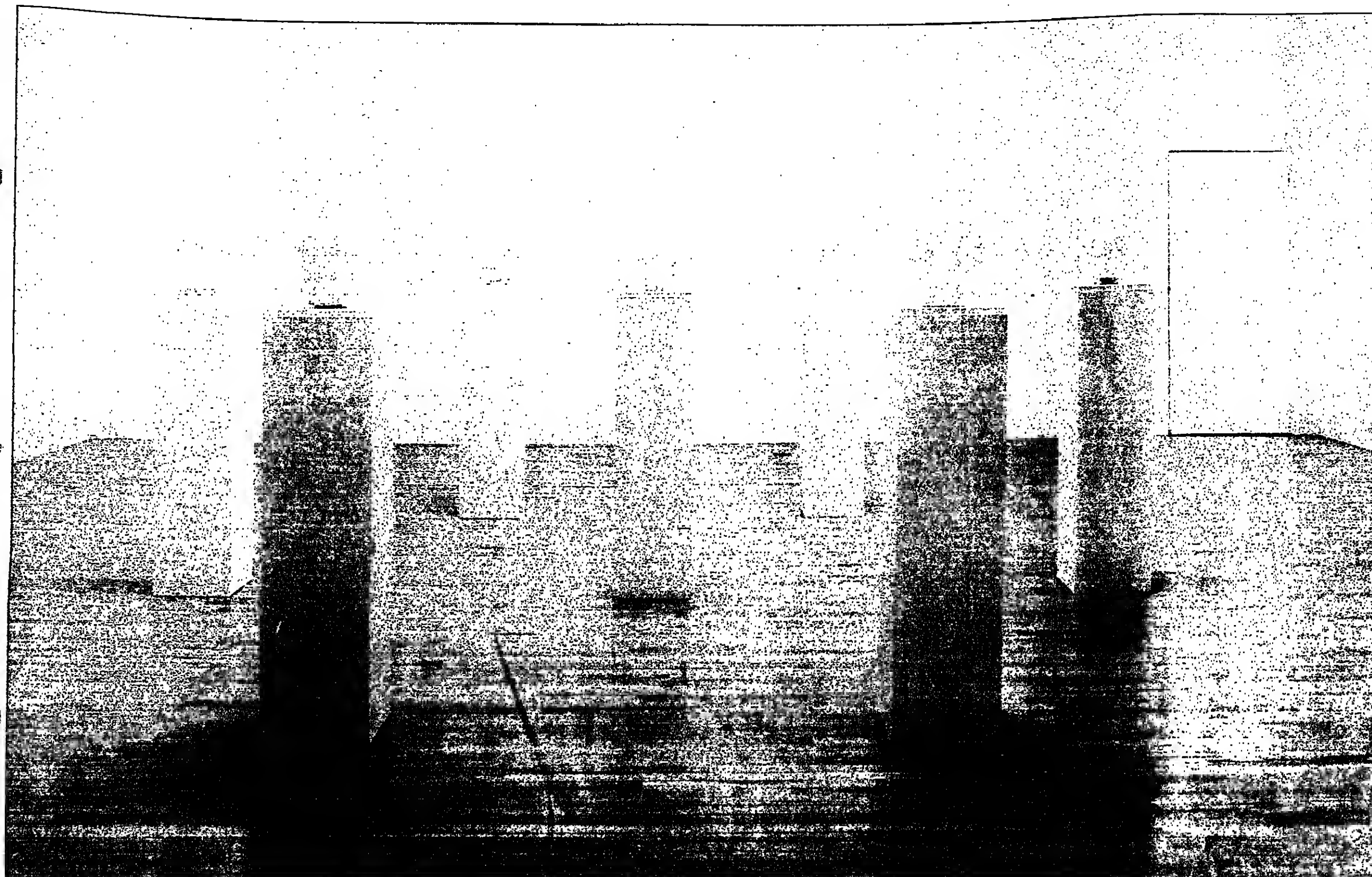
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17/VISUAL ARTS

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY
4 NOVEMBER 1997

Oh come on, get a grip...



There's this annual exhibition. It's usually four artists in their thirties, it's chosen by judges who never argue in public. It's called the Turner Prize shortlist. See it for what it is, says Tom Lubbock

It's hard to believe that the Turner Prize now makes many hearts beat faster. Everyone knows the score, and all the reactions it generates look entirely *pro forma*. Each year the media obligingly declares it "controversial". And each year the Tate Gallery responds with statements and accompanying literature of such administrative *froidure* that you feel like saying: oh come on, it's not that boring. But still it is a little boring, and I think everyone could settle down if that was simply admitted.

One aspect of this is the fact that the award itself is no big deal to anyone. Compared to the Booker Prize, the question of who's going actually to win the Turner Prize is a minor matter. The main thing is the shortlist, for which the prize is mere focus and pretext. And the Tate probably wouldn't mind dropping the sordid, competitive side of it altogether, if there were some other effective way to catch the public eye for a handful of contemporary artists – always four nowadays, though there's nothing in the rules to require this number.

That's really the only trouble with the Turner Prize, the way it has an agenda which is perfectly clear but never quite made explicit. Of course there's a policy to favour some kinds of art over others. And of course it's suspicious that (unlike the Booker) the judges never break ranks and dissociate themselves from their colleagues' decisions, or confess it's been a thin year all round; and concomitantly that (unlike the Booker) the judges are always chosen solidly from within the art world with never a distinguished layperson included who might not be quite reliable in their tastes.

But if these points could somehow be openly established, then the thing could be more easily accepted as what it obviously is: a showcase for four

artists, generally in their thirties, using non-traditional media and methods, reflecting the curatorial consensus with no rank outsiders considered. Granted, that restricted rubric wouldn't have the big fanfare of "the nation's top art prize". But it would be honest. It would announce the relevant terms of judgement. It would even allow the likelihood that some years won't offer such rich pickings.

This year, for example. Not that the shortlist exhibition is a bad show, exactly. The general impression is of art that neither fails nor excels, but simply does the job; perfectly adequate, perfectly competent. Now it may seem odd to talk of competence in a contemporary art context, where every artist is a lone operator and the concept of "skills" doesn't apply. But in this art too, though it seems so diverse, there are basic, shared skills: giving objects a curious mental resonance, say, and producing a paradoxical reaction in the viewer. You can't directly teach them, at least not in the way you can teach drawing, and a "low-to" manual would seem to be a satire – but that only reflects the way that absolute originality is assumed to be the bottom line here. Wrongly. For you can certainly learn these skills, and then deploy them with more or less talent.

The exhibition has one fine wonder, Cornelia Parker's *Mass*. This is a multitude of particles of charred wood, suspended (on threads) mid-air, in cube formation, larger bits in the centre, smaller ones on the periphery, giving it an outward movement, so that the whole thing is like the moment of an explosion held in a box. Explosion isn't quite right, though. It's more like an instantaneous dematerialisation – not with a bang but a ping. It's lovely how it keeps on being sudden. One day, perhaps, someone could get together all the great apparitional hits of recent years: Whiteread's room, Gormley's vista of clay-folk, Wilson's sump-oil piece, and this work too. By sheer impact and evident public address, it would make the kind of winning propaganda for current art that the Turner Prize strives for and seldom delivers.

In Parker's other pieces, we move from wonder to something more standard. The theme of traces and remains continues



Simply doing the job: Christine Borland's 'The Dead Teach the Living', 1997 (main picture); (from the top) Cornelia Parker's 'Mass (Colder, Darker Matter)', 1997 (detail); Gillian Wearing's 'Sacha and Mum', 1996; Angela Bulloch's 'Superstructure with Satellites', 1997 (detail)

on a smaller scale – the odd residues of things, presented in frames or glass boxes, a head of hair clippings, the filament of vinyl cut from a record groove, the marks of a diamond engagement ring scratched on glass, and some real strangenesses like a silver teaspoon stretched into a wire the length of Niagara Falls. You often have to read the label to get the resonance of absent presence, but that doesn't worry me. The trouble is that traces and absent presences is a very stock theme; and while Parker gives it an idiosyncratic, Victorian-feeling twist, a familiar old theme and set of responses it stays.

Christine Borland's work goes the same way. The treatments are new and can be piquant but you know just where it's coming from. *The Dead Teach the Living* has a group of human heads on plinths, cast very pure-looking in white plastic, but a moment's inspection reveals that they're actually physiognomic specimens demonstrating probably racial types, and therefore deeply sinister (or if you don't see it, a wall-text tells you, and that they're cast from models found in a German museum).

Two things to note. One is that the viewer response "looks nice but turns out nasty" is another well-worn art-riff. The other is that physiognomic "science" and its pernicious uses and results have become a favourite cultural studies topic which there are a lot of books about. I suppose the effect does depend on what's new to you, ideas-wise. It's just bad luck if you've read some of these books, because it leaves *The Dead Teach the Living*, and Borland's other dodgy science-based pieces, as only art-footnotes to a thriving area of criticism.

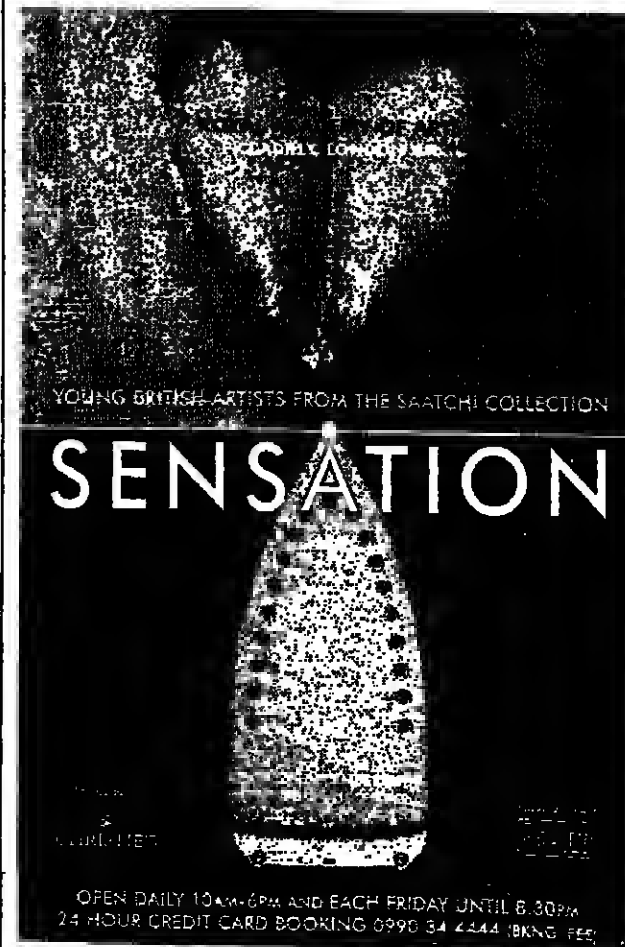
Gillian Wearing does videos and photos about collisions of private life and public exposure, spontaneity and performance, and though that description trips off the tongue a bit too easily – again, we know where we are, we've seen a few plays and films dealing with these matters – the results can get under the skin effectively. Her best thing is probably the video of children's confessions being lip-synched by adults, which is a good deal more edgy than that Dennis Potter drama with Col-

in Welland in shorts, and it's currently on view in "Sensation". Here there's another adult-child work, *Sacha and Mum*, in which a mother and grown-up daughter are locked in an unending physical tussle, veering rapidly from cuddling to bullying to near-violence and back again so you can hardly tell the difference. The film plays backwards to further disorient.

Disorient and trouble it does, partly because the daughter in her underwear seems such a helpless victim (special needs?), partly because (but of course) the action just goes on with no explanation or denouement. But this is a problem too, because it leaves you only with the thought that parent-child relationships are fraught, treacherous and double-binding, a thought which surely everyone will agree they have had before. It's a work that, as they say, "asks questions". But when the questions in question are up and running already, this isn't the dynamic thing it wants to be. In fact, the "asking questions" nostrum has become a disabling shibboleth: sounds very open and stimulating, ends up often in vacancy.

Angela Bulloch asks some questions too. Her large construction of multi-coloured donut-shaped poufs, which set off noises when you sit or lie on them, asks questions about the difference between art and soft-furnishings, and viewing and participating, but I really can't see what the point of these questions is. It introduces a little oasis of work-spectator "democracy" into the gallery, but it makes me think of those restaurants that have a "mix your own salad" counter. Just try shifting the work around the floor a little, and you'll see how far the gallery attendants will let democracy go. Or are the limits of participation more the object? And don't we know these limits already? No, this isn't good. But on that issue, with so much art operating on the principle that "the spectator makes the work" (a principle which can have very rich results too), it seems right that some year or other the Turner Prize too should turn its sights round and be awarded to the Unknown Viewer. It might perk things up.

At the Tate Gallery, London SW1 (0171-887 8000) to 18 Jan



Men are notoriously ignorant about their health, particularly, says one GP, the 'below the belt' stuff. Some men want a national network of clinics just for them; the rest are too busy enjoying their beer, fags and greasy breakfasts. Peter Baker on the message that so many men don't want to hear.

"I had an erection problem for two years before I did anything about it," says John Scott, a 54-year-old surveyor. "I didn't see my GP partly because I was embarrassed, but mainly because I thought he'd be unsympathetic."

"I eventually went to a Harley Street clinic, but the doctor ripped me off something rotten. He prescribed penile injections: it effectively cost me £50 every time I had sex with my wife."

"I heard about the Open For Men clinic in Lewisham [south London] and made an appointment. I was astonished when they discovered I had diabetes, since I hadn't been detected by the private doctor I'd seen, even though it's known to be a common cause of impotence."

"I now control the diabetes through my diet, and Open For Men supply me with the drugs I inject to get an erection. They also give me a general check-up every six months."

"I've found it a brilliant service. If I hadn't gone there, my diabetes might not have been detected and my marriage might well have broken up. The atmosphere of the clinic is very different from a GP service. There's more time, I'm not embarrassed, and I feel I can be completely honest."

In one way, Mr Scott is lucky. Although it takes him 20 minutes to drive to Open For Men, he still has relatively easy access to one of just a handful of specialist men's clinics operating within the NHS. (There are also a few private "well man" clinics providing much the same, for often considerable amounts of cash.) But a survey published today by Men's Health Matters, a new health education campaign, claims that many more men are demanding this service.

The survey, for which the pollsters Gallup interviewed 839 men, found almost three-quarters would like to see more men's health clinics, and two-thirds believe a men's confidential health helpline would be a good idea. Men's notoriously blasé attitude to their health could at last be changing; the survey found no major differences between the sexes as to how long they say they would wait before seeing their GP if feeling unwell.

But can this evidence justify the cost of setting up a national network of men's health clinics? Despite all the improvements in public health this century, men can still expect to live six years fewer than women. They also have more accidents, drink more, take more drugs, and are four times as likely to commit suicide. Mortality rates have generally been falling for men and women, but the rate for men aged 15-44 was 5 per cent higher in 1995 than in 1985. Despite all this, the average man makes half as many visits to his GP as the average woman.

The Department of Health has at last funded research into the reasons why so many men avoid taking better care of their health, while the minister for public health, Tessa Jowell, is known to be interested in men's health issues.

Proposals to tackle gender inequalities are expected to feature in



Men are getting more health-conscious, a survey suggests, but the medical profession isn't celebrating yet. Photograph: Tony Stone Images

The well man (a rare sight)

a forthcoming Green Paper on public health. Ms Jowell's department is also working on a health advice leaflet for men, aimed particularly at the 40-plus age group, likely to be published next spring.

Ministerial backing for a national network of men's health clinics remains unlikely, however, not only for financial reasons but also because of doubts about whether men would use them.

One such service has been run since 1980 by Dr Tim Watkin Jones from his GP surgery in Flintshire. Each weekly afternoon clinic attracts an average of six patients for routine check-ups, as well as consultations about specific problems.

"I set up this clinic because I felt that, while women's health was fairly high on the agenda, we were letting men down," says Dr Watkin Jones. It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of his service, but it has detected several cases of potentially serious high blood pressure. "Most men are still not genned up on male-specific, below-the-belt stuff. Some young men think you can't get cancer down there; we've seen some things, such as testicular lumps, which men often think are trivial but which could be quite serious." More widely, says Dr Watkin Jones, "the clinic helps build up a rapport between men and

the GP's surgery."

Open For Men sees about 10 men each Friday evening. "Some men come from quite a long distance to see us," says Dr Lesley Bacon, who runs the service. "Most of our clients are between 25 and 44, and they want to discuss sexual health problems, although quite a few come because they're worried about their cardiovascular system, obesity and smoking, or because they want a general check-up."

Dr Bacon finds that men "often don't go to see GPs because they feel the surgeries are too busy, or that asking for a check-up is wasting their doctor's time." She has found that many men visit Open For Men because their partners have asked them to after seeing publicity for the service at a local well woman clinic.

The evidence from these two clinics indicates the importance of offering men the opportunity for a general check-up, as well as a longer appointment than is normally available at a GP's surgery. The check-up seems to provide the "excuse" many men feel they need to use a health service, and they often find that a more relaxed consultation gives them time to disclose whatever is really worrying them.

As John Scott's experience also suggests, when it comes to sexual health, the availability of a confidential ser-

vice can also be critical. Indeed, this is what seems to have underpinned the success of the Impotence Association's telephone helpline. It has received more than 12,000 calls since its launch in January 1995; in September 1997 alone, it received more than 700 calls, as well as 300 letters.

About 135 calls a month are also handled by the general men's health helpline operated since 1995 by the Medical Advisory Service. (The men's helpline is now being funded by Yamano, the drug company that is also sponsoring the Men's Health Matters campaign.)

"The anonymity of the helpline is very important," says Kathleen McGrath, MAS's director of medical services. "Our male callers can ask questions that they might think are too silly to put to their GP. I think many men are asking us for 'permission' to go to their doctor, or are rehearsing what they'll say when they get there."

It does seem as though telephone helplines are another useful way of reaching men who might otherwise delay getting medical advice.

What of the survey's claim that men are getting more health-conscious? "My impression is that men's attitudes haven't changed an awful lot," says Dr Ian Banks, a GP with a special interest in men's health. "Where there has been an increase in men's inter-

est in their health, it may well be just amongst younger, middle-class men. Working-class men have probably been much less affected."

Dr Sian Griffiths, director of public health for Oxfordshire and a committed men's health advocate, also believes the Men's Health Matters survey is "optimistic". She would like to see more evidence of change before starting to celebrate.

More clinics and helplines could well make some difference, but the gender gap in health may only begin to close only when many more men change their lifestyles by stopping smoking, cutting down on their drinking, eating less saturated fat, tackling their stress and generally taking fewer risks with their health. That will require campaigns that appeal directly to the male psyche, rather than relying on the traditional, and dubious, notion that the best way to reach men is by targeting health messages at their wives. Such work with men is in its infancy; until it becomes mainstream, too many men will die too young.

Medical Advisory Service men's helpline: 0181-995 4448; **Impotence Association helpline:** 0181-767 7791. A "Waterworks" information leaflet on prostate problems is available from Men's Health Matters, Blythe Hall, 100 Blythe Road, London W14 0HB (send sae).

At last! The £15 personal trainer

How would you like your own personal fitness expert? Nice idea but strictly for celebrities, thought an out-of-condition Cheryl Hicks. Then she heard about an outfit bringing 'personal training to the masses'.

"Whaa! You mean you've never had a personal trainer?" exclaimed the PR lady. Er, no... at something like £45 an hour, it was neither top of my priorities nor within my budget.

This was different, she insisted. Get Motivated, a new outfit set up by an ex-City type, was planning to "transform the shape and lifestyle habits of the nation" and "bring personal training to the masses" by offering sessions at the startlingly low price of £15. I could try it myself. "Don't worry if you're not too fit."

Until my mid-thirties, I could wolf down masses of fat and sugar, stay in bed all day and still stay thin. I never gave gyms or dieting a thought. Two pregnancies changed all that. I was demoralised by the number of clothes I could no longer get into and developed the "apple" shape (extra weight on the upper torso and abdomen, rather than hips and thighs) associated with a high risk of heart disease. Apart from lifting a three-year-old into the bath and walking with the children (at a snail's pace) to the park, I never exercised. I had no desire to develop a goddess-type body, but I did want to feel more like my old self. I phoned the PR and accepted.

Nearly all their trainers had degrees in exercise science or human movement study; many were from Australia and New Zealand, because knowledge there was ahead of Britain by about five years (not because they were young girls keen on travel, then?).

Did I want male or female? A woman, please. Was I the kind of person who liked to be hulked? No, thank you: a gentle approach would suit.

Stephanie, a cheerful Australian half my age, took no notice of the toys scattered on the carpet, nor my old khaki shorts which didn't quite zip up. She had a questionnaire. Main aim? To lose a little weight, tone up, get fitter. What kind of exercise did I like doing? Er... walking? What prevented me from exercising? Children, work, lack of energy, life.

Posture? Abducted scapula

(hunched shoulders from too much deskwork), a slight head tilt, slight lordosis (bottom sticking out). Feet: slightly flat, in need of good supportive trainers. Abdominal strength: average - not bad, said Stephanie, for someone who hadn't done a sit-up in years. Hip-waist ratio (to measure the amount of fat carried around the abdomen): less than .8, so within the healthy range. Resting heart rate was 65 beats a minute, again low for someone sedentary.

To reduce the flab, said Stephanie, my heart had to be working at 105-131 bpm, the "fat-burning zone" - brisk walking pace.

We began the real thing: chin pokes to combat my head tilt, tricep extensions to pull back the muscles in the back, abdominals, overhead tricep extensions with weights to tone my arms - and prone paddles to strengthen back and bottom. I would have enjoyed it, except most of the time I was thinking about how much else I had to do and feeling guilty about the children being looked after by someone else while I concentrated on my body. You need time to yourself, said Stephanie reassuringly.

Afterwards, I have to admit despite my cynicism, I felt great. And the next few days, on a break with the family, I did feel inspired to do more. I ran up and down the seashore, measuring my heartbeat, did my abdominals as the children watched telly in the hotel room, used a heavy lamp as a weight for the triceps. I felt better physically than I had for a long time.

The next time I saw Stephanie, I was definitely stressed: too much work, too many problems with childcare. We went for a walk at a very brisk pace along the river (heart rate 113). I should have got into it, but I was gloomy about my three-year-old who hadn't wanted to go to playgroup and the house we were desperately trying to buy. Doing leg stretches just past Tower Bridge, I burst into tears. Stephanie pat her arm round me and said she always knew when people were low.

By our third session, I had done no exercise in the interval and hadn't even managed to buy a pair of trainers. I was still feeling tired and emotional. We did some aerobic warm-ups, but my heart wasn't in it.

Since meeting Stephanie, I've lost my scorn for personal trainers. I have three more free sessions to go. I'd love to do them, but don't know how to fit them in...

Get Motivated, 0171-736 0402.

Narcolepsy and car accidents

In an article about narcolepsy (Health, 10 June), we reported the statement that daytime sleepiness caused by narcolepsy and other sleep disorders is the commonest cause of fatal

car accidents. We are now informed that this is wrong. Narcolepsy, which is a rare sleep disorder, is not a common cause of car accidents, although daytime sleepiness caused by shiftwork, insomnia and other problems is a factor in about a quarter of motorway accidents.

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DR PHIL
HAMMOND

**My Mum
tried an
impromptu
sight test.
'Could you
read the
top line of
that chart?'**
**'What
chart?'**

"The first time I saw my son", I just wept. Mother, Birmingham.

As a top media doc, I get sent a lot of unsolicited press releases. Most are binned, but occasionally one attracts my bespectacled eye. Today, Lady Luck is shining on Dillard & Aitchison (the opticians Burt Reynolds sold out for) who have launched a Specs Power programme "to break the chain of poor self-image in children who wear glasses". Apparently, parents view children in specs with guilt and shock, and all the children surveyed had been bullied. Cue heart-rending anecdotes from Dr Phil's scarred past...

I first noticed I had a poor image of other people in biology. I didn't want to sit too close to the front, so I toughed it out with William "Thick" Hickey at the back. From there, I could make out very little of teacher's anatomy or his anatomical drawings. What little biology I gleaned was from copying Thick, who can't have been that thick or else I'd never have made it to medical school, would I?

It didn't strike me that not being able to see clearly was anything abnormal, and it wasn't until my Mum tried an impromptu sight test that I was found out. "Could you read the top line of that chart?" "What chart?" Boom, boom, and off we go to the opticians.

"Now we just have to choose some frames. Might I suggest a dark rim to balance the pale eyebrows?" "What do you think Mum?" "I think they're very nice." "You don't think they're a bit - you know - obvious?" "How about a

dark top and a clear bottom?" And so I walked out with what looked like a sea slug asleep on my forehead. Not that that was my main concern. The lenses were so strong that the pavement came up to meet me. Still, it was cheaper than cider.

Monday morning at Marlborough Grammar School. Tentative entrance from old boy in new glasses. "Hey, look! It's Joe Nutsy!"

Thankfully, it was a full year before we went comprehensive, so I had a bit of time to work on my self-image before the heckling got really personal. Even then, I only wore them in class. How I wish I'd been brave like Rogerson and worn them round the back of the French hut.

Most of my life was spent in a not-too-disagreeable haze. I think Marlborough boasted the widest high street in Britain. I'm not sure how many insurance claims I fathered trying to cross it, but miraculously I was never hit. It was only when my mother crossed me on the pavement and I completely blanked her that she realised I wasn't getting on with my sea slugs. And I've still got the wrinkles from all that squinting.

We agreed that I could have contact lenses as soon as my sight stabilised, but my myopia spiralled downwards before finally stopping at minus 8. At 16, I switched to contacts, my eyebrows got some sunlight and I could kiss with confidence at discos. Praise the Lord.

My love affair with contact lenses lasted until I hitched round Australia at

18. I lost my carrying case and ended up storing them in a sock overnight. I squashed one lens putting the sock on and the other split when a piece of stray coconut hit me in the eye. Somehow, I managed to blithely to Sydney and get on to the plane home with no optical correction. When I got to Heathrow, my Mum met me off the plane. I walked straight past her.

So now I'm back in specs. At 35, I'm confident enough to wear them all the time, can pick out my Mum across a crowded room and only take them off during long consultations when I want to drift off for a few minutes. However, after 15 years in the same frames (my empathic, tortoiseshell ones - see picture), I was finally mistaken for David Mellor. OK, so I was buck naked apart from my Chelsea top, but it destroyed my self-image.

Choosing new frames has been very traumatic, especially since the market has been flooded with elliptical Euro-styles that make you look like an extra from *Diva*. My local optician was a model of tolerance and allowed me to take frames home to try out. After much deliberation, my Mum and my wife went for the Milky Bar Kid look. I tried to have an opinion but it was all a bit blurry. It may be a while before the *Independent* photographer cottons on, but the new image is on show every Monday, BBC 2, 8pm. For those who prefer the old one, try Channel 5, every Monday, 10.30pm.

* in glasses.

19/FEATURES

My book made mothers feel guilty? I wonder why

In the week when the nation's attention was transfixed by a trial involving a baby, an au pair and a working mother, Dinah Hall found it salutary to talk to Penelope Leach, guru to a generation of British mothers. Her attitudes heightened for many the difficult dilemma of the working mother and left many feeling guilty. In the new edition of her book she has adjusted with the times.

Imagine one of the disciples interviewing Jesus, and you begin to get an idea of what it feels like to be sitting in Penelope Leach's kitchen.

As a journalist, of course, I should be doing a Judas and asking difficult questions, such as: "Whatever happened to maternal instinct?" and, "Are children like cars, that we need manuals to get them on the road?" But as one of the millions of mothers who spent the Eighties with a baby on one breast and Leach's bible of child care, *Baby & Child*, propped up on the other, my head resting on a metaphorical brickcase, I just want to throw myself at her feet and ask for absolution for parental failings.

This is really most unfair on Penelope Leach, who never set out to be dogmatic or authoritarian, but who has ever since had working mothers trying to offload their burdens of guilt on her. "What I can't understand," she says, "is that they tell me my book made them feel guilty, and then show me their copies, which are dog-eared, covered in coffee stains, breast milk and spit-up. And I say, if it made you feel like that, why didn't you bin it? You do rely on people to decide for themselves whether a book is useful to them or not. Disagreeing with it is a different matter, because disagreement must help you think out what you feel."

Leach has completely rewritten the book because she feels that the world has changed so much since she wrote it in 1977.

In terms of both parenting situations and new research - that working the occasional single father into the text would not have been enough. In 1977 the majority of mothers stayed at home, at least until their children were of school age. So a sentence like the following would ruffle no feathers: "A three-month-old baby," she wrote, "is ready to form a passionate and exclusive emotional tie with somebody, and you are elected." In the 1997 edition it is changed, significantly, to: "and, if you are the most central, loving person in his minute world, you are elected."

Although the title has been given a more cuddly Nineties possessive pronoun - *Your Baby & Child* - her basic philosophy remains unchanged. It is still unapologetically child-centred - a phrase that has dropped from favour in recent years, taking the blame not only for educational failings but also for the rise of that spectre of the Nineties, the "tyrannical" child. But Leach still firmly believes that getting it right for the child is often the same as getting it right for the parents. "After all, what's more disruptive than a whining, bored child?"

The Leach mother never has to feel guilty about following her instinct to cuddle and



Penelope Leach: her philosophy is still unapologetically child-centred

Photograph: Andrew Burman

comfort. Leach also questioned the idea of a "spoilt" child. "It's not what you give them, but why. If you give them things and attention so that you can go to work, or take a bath, maybe that's 'spoiling'. But if it's because you can't resist the expression on their faces when you give them a packet of stickers, or because it's a nice thing for a three-year-old to have... You can be fortunate without being spoilt."

Leach was never explicitly anti-working mothers - she herself was one, though always part time. (She had the first of her two babies at the age of 28, once she had got her PhD in psychology - she was one of the first of the "elderly primagravidae".) But, inevitably, because she was able to put across so well exactly how babies and small children feel, any women with an ounce of empathy was going to feel miserable and guilty on reading about, for example, separation anxiety. And in the Eighties, working women were particularly sensitive about their position; the myth of superwoman was at its most potent and the

woman who succeeded in her career was also determined to be a perfect mother. She was intelligent and literate, and it wasn't enough just to rely on maternal instinct: she wanted a more cerebral approach to child-bearing, which is precisely why she was attracted to Leach in the first place.

Baby & Child was once aptly described by an American as a "PhD in child care". Leach, a research psychologist, was highly qualified in the subject, but could also bring her own brand of empathy to it. Even now her descriptions of a baby's smile has me practically lactating. But all this knowledge had a price: would-be perfectionist mothers read the book and inevitably at some point felt let down by their own expectations.

"I can't apologise for this," says Leach. "It would be senseless to write a book about doing a job and not suggest we do it as well as possible. I'm not saying anyone who can't manage is a failure; on the contrary, nobody can manage to be a perfect parent all the time. But we should at least have a crack at it."

It will be interesting to see whether

Leach will be able to bond with the new generation of mothers. Siobhan Peattie, policy research officer at the National Childbirth Trust, says that middle-class NCT members at least are still reading as avidly as they did in the Eighties, and that they tend to select books which "reinforce and reflect their parenting values", though NCT Maternity Sales have not stocked Leach's book for some time. Miriam Stopard appears to be the frontrunner at present - possibly because she has such a high media profile - while Kitzinger still appeals to the more "alternative" mother, who wants to give birth at home. Miriam Stopard's books may be easier to digest for a generation of parents weaned on daytime television, but *Your Baby & Child* is unapologetically literate. And if one is going to make classist assumptions about reading habits, does this mean she is reaching only a fairly middle-class audience, maybe even preaching to the converted?

"Yes, it's a lot of words," agrees Leach, "but I couldn't have done it any other way."

It's gone so far the other way over the past 10 years - the Dorling Kindersley style of snippets of information. But I really, really don't see it as preaching. You won't be able to look something up in the index and find a statement that will "put you right" on it. It's about to what extent you feel the same side of the fence as your children - do as you would be done by. And I suppose, if that's preaching, then I'll have to take the fall for it."

One of the biggest changes in the years since *Baby & Child* was first published is the increase in day care. In the past Leach has criticised nursery care, particularly for small babies, for whom one stable care-giver is so important. But she is currently involved in a research project to assess the long-term effects of day care, and believes that in some families it may well be a valuable solution.

"I know of so-called stay-at-home mothers in America who spend the day on the golf course, leaving the children with au pairs. I wouldn't say that those children are getting more love and security than a child

at a good nursery." One thing she is adamant about, though: a mother should always stay with a sick child. Asked whether she has any regrets about anything she did as a parent, she says she still feels guilty about going back to work too soon after her two-year-old had meningitis. And she is particularly alarmed about the American concept of "sick child day care": they are opening up special wards in hospitals for children who are not well enough to go to their ordinary day care.

"Imagine - a sick child, being looked after by complete strangers. No, that's too much for me." We discuss how any mother could do this - though I can summon up half-a-dozen who wouldn't hesitate. But Leach is, as ever, reluctant to be too judgemental - she could see there would be times when a vital meeting at work might necessitate it. No, she could never have done it herself - "but then I found it very difficult to be a proper professional mother."

Your Baby & Child (Penguin, £15.99)

just I just want to ask her one question about her and Bill

'The Ambassador said Mrs Clinton would speak to as many guests as possible. An enormous queue formed. Oh no, I thought, she'll never get round us all, and anyway I want to watch the second half of Everton vs Southampton ... Hunter Davies reports from the American Embassy.

You wait 20 years, then two come along almost at the same time. A fortnight ago, it was 10 Downing Street for a reception given by dear Tone and the lovely Cherie. On Sunday it was the American Embassy, for a reception to meet the First Lady.

Yes, they really do call her that. It's not just a shorthand term, dreamt up by the media. It's official - I have it here, printed on my invitation. "A Reception in Honor of the First Lady." Note also the American spelling.

Once you get on one invitation list, for whatever reason, I suspect they hand your name and address around. A bit like double glazing firms or insurance companies.

My wife on this occasion refused to go. She hates standing around, smalltalking, when she could be at home reading a

book. So I went on my own, mainly because I had a personal question I wanted to ask Mrs Clinton. If, of course, I got the chance.

At Downing Street, each guest on arrival was introduced personally to the PM, and we got our little moment of intimate chat.

Would I manage to get intimate with Hillary? Or would the American heavies drag me away as soon as I started to ask about her and Bill?

There were police everywhere outside the Embassy. Once inside, I was met by a very official-looking woman in uniform with a badge saying "Pinkerton", who said, "Take your hands out of your pocket."

I was wearing my white suit, once again - well, it is my only suit. My wife had warned me not to slouch or put hands in pockets, but this did seem a bit bossy. Turned out to be a body check, before going through an airport-style security barrier.

On the way into the reception room I met Salman Rushdie.

"You must be used to this," I said. "All this security stuff." When he came to my house, a couple of years ago, he had three heavies with him - one of whom went off and left his mobile phone behind.

Salman stood on the edge of the reception room, waiting for his partner to arrive, so I went into the scrum determined to mingle.



There were about 200 people present. Roughly the same number - as at Number 10, I spotted Richard Branson, once again - he must get invited everywhere - but without his wife this time. He was talking to Sir Brian Mawhinney. I suppose he'll go anywhere these days, now he's out of government.

I was greeted by Helen Mirren, very warmly, which was nice. Then she introduced me to her partner, a hunk of an American called Taylor some-

thing, who is a film director. I wondered what sort of drinks and eats we would get. Three to five on a Sunday afternoon is a bit early for real drinks. "Perhaps it'll be toast and marmite," said Helen.

I talked to my local MP, Glenda Jackson. I commiserated with her about some rotters in the local Tory party in Hampstead who are offering a reward, according to our local paper, for a photo of her smoking. I suggested she bought a packet of those sweet ciga-

rettes, the sugary ones with the red tips, get herself photographed with one, then sue. Har har, she said.

David Bailey was there, looking his usual scruffy self, though he did have a tie on, undone, and was carrying a camera. "How did you get that in?"

I then got another kiss from a lovely young lady - Sarah McCauley, current squeeze of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I have known Sarah since she was at school with my older

daughter. Don't get worried, Gordon.

"So are you getting married?" I asked. "Come on, you can tell Uncle Hunt." "I don't know," she replied. Are you not getting married to him then?" "I don't know," she said. But she did say she would invite me to a drinks do at Number 11.

I then noticed there were two babies present - both aged less than six months. One was Salman Rushdie's, being breastfed by his partner who had at last arrived. The other was Zola. No, not the footballer, but Ian Hargreaves's baby. He's the editor of the *New Statesman*, and was there with his wife, who is a Baptist Minister. "Shouldn't you be working?" I said, "as it's a Sunday?"

I took a service this morning," she replied. We all stood around for about 45 minutes, making such idle chat, till at last there was a flurry and Mrs Clinton arrived, followed by some men in suits, with electronic earpieces. She was wearing a blue, buttoned-up jacket, a black skirt and black stockings. Big blue eyes, which I hadn't expected, and a clean, bright, eager expression.

She was introduced by the new American Ambassador, Philip Lader. He was a bit pompous and formal in his speech, lavishing praise on the First Lady, which, of course, is part of his job. Behind him Mrs Clinton was making a funny

face, clenching her heart in mock horror. That was nice.

Then she spoke to the assembled guests, without notes, and was witty and amusing. She said she'd had the weekend at Chequers with Tony Blair and his wife - whose name she pronounced "Sherry" - and said they had been invited to Washington by the President. The date would be announced very shortly. She then made a joke about being in touch with Mrs Roosevelt, which all the Americans present laughed at, but I didn't quite get. Apparently there has been some newspaper report saying Hillary has been in extrasensory contact with Mrs Roosevelt.

After her speech, the Ambassador said Mrs Clinton would try to get round as many guests individually as possible. An enormous queue soon formed. Oh no, I thought, she'll never get round us all, and anyway I want to get home to watch the second half of the Everton/Southampton match on telly. On the other hand, I'll probably never get to meet her in the flesh again. So I joined the queue, both elbows going. I waited about half-an-hour, then, oh rapture, I got to talk to the First Lady - one to one.

The Ambassador introduced me, explaining I was a writer. So he'd done his homework. We shook hands, and I said I just wanted to ask her one question. About her and the

President, actually...

For a moment, I sensed a flicker of worry from the Ambassador, wondering what I might be going to ask.

I explained that I publish and write a guidebook to the Lake District, and in it I list all the famous people who have stayed in Lakeland, including President Woodrow Wilson. Well, someone told me that she and Bill, sorry, Mr President, had had a holiday in Lakeland when they were courting. I'd never been able to verify it. Was it possibly true?

"It sure is true," she said. "We got engaged there."

"Brilliant," I said. "What a good choice. Whereabouts?" "Emmerdale."

"Oh, I know it well. We live in the next valley. Which end of Emmerdale?"

"I don't remember exactly. But it was a beautiful day. We'd walked and walked - and then Bill proposed."

"Was he at Oxford at the time?"

"No, no. It was just after we had both graduated from law school. Then we went off to England for a holiday. And he proposed."

"And did he produce a ring?"

"No, no."

"Why not?"

"Well, I didn't immediately accept his proposal. Not there and then. I thought about it for a few weeks, then I said yes."

Ah, isn't that lovely.

A strike against the goal of full European union



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"The English are getting anxious and don't understand," said a leading French newspaper yesterday. But, *not chers*, we have good reason to be anxious and, *excusez-moi*, we do understand very well why a transport strike that blocks the highways of France is not just some domestic incident to be addressed (perhaps even forgiven) in terms of French politics and industrial relations. This is a European incident. It affects the very point of European Union cross-border trade. What the French government chooses to do or not is not just for the French to appraise. The capacity of the French state, all our states, is a common concern. It is not only economics that must converge if common money is created. European unity hangs on the ability of the Italian state to enforce budgetary discipline after EMU begins, the willingness of the German Chancellor to say boo to the CAP-loving farmers of Bavaria and the obligation on the French state to guarantee common carriage.

We don't need to reach deep into the entrails of the French haulage business to note this is a dispute with a past. Both the workforce and the employers are split into separate and to some extent rival representative bodies – the architecture of French industrial relations is pitifully unmodern. This is by no means the first great disruption by drivers in recent times. Yet the first, in 1984, saw the drivers agreeing to be used by the employers as a battering ram against the left-of-centre government headed by Pierre Bérégovoy. During the most recent dispute, a year ago, the right was in power under Alain Juppé and it suited the socialist and other opposition parties – themselves now in power – to lend support to the drivers. It does seem the formula that settled that dispute has been deliberately sabotaged by some of the employers – which helps explain why the French are being so uncharacteristically stoical about the dispute, with opinion, so far, tending to the drivers' side.

All that, however, is beside the point. In an economy fit for the 21st century there have to be better ways of resolving disputes than barriers with spikes across roads: the real problem is the anachronistic nature of industrial relations and the failure of the French left to contemplate its relationship with the unions. This is not a matter of our preaching from some lofty height. There is a case to be made – we have made it – that the Thatcherite reforms of industrial relations law may have gone too far in altering the balance between employers and employees. But we stand firm behind that core Thatcherite reform, the abolition of secondary picketing. What we are seeing on the approach to the Calais port is precisely that: the unacceptable use of industrial power to coerce third parties.

And where is the famed authority of the French state, with its *Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité*, its *Gendarmerie Nationale*, its army, its cult of Bonaparte, who came to power having let the street blockers of his day have that famous whiff of grapeshot? The French government was asked by its neighbours at least to maintain certain safe corridors through the country. So far its response has been to order the destruction of barriers on the Pont du Rhin in Strasbourg and on the Spanish border at Bixiou. This is not enough. Police action at the Dunkirk and other refineries show what can be done. The Jospin government has to do what it takes to settle the dispute – it possesses (unlike modern British governments) extensive powers to intervene and impose agreements.

It is important to understand why Tony Blair and colleagues have a right to demand such action when they meet at the Anglo-French summit in a couple of days. It has nothing to do with that peculiar sentiment of mutual condescension which perfumes relations between our two countries. It has to do, instead, with the prospect and possibilities of Europe.

Much is made, in discussions about EMU, about how powers are being relinquished to a non-elected (and non-political?) body in the European Central Bank. Less is made of how the success of EMU depends critically on the strength of domestic governments – to maintain fiscal rectitude, to sort out massive pensions overhang, to sort out the liberalisation of markets, especially labour markets, that will have to occur if a single currency is to work. This is not about imposing Anglo-American models on the Continent. It is a sheer matter of fact: without greater flexibility in markets, the adjustments a single currency will demand cannot take place.

What does or does not happen on the boulevards and the autoroutes this week is thus a test, a very important test, of the capacity of national governments to play their part in Europe. The French government has to understand that and accordingly hang tough.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor
and include a daytime telephone number.
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E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address.
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Woodward trial

Sir: When Gary and Sue Woodward came to me for advice concerning Louise after her arrest, I publicly proclaimed that if one had to be tried outside one's native land there would be few places one would prefer to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Like many others on both sides of the Atlantic, I watched with growing disbelief and horror as accumulative human errors produced a catastrophic miscarriage of justice and blatant abuse of human rights by an experienced and reputable trial judge.

Two substantial points in this trial attract immediate attention.

First, the extraordinary local gambit of "loose-or-noose", where an inexperienced foreign youngster is encouraged to bet her life on the advice of respected lawyers, including the active encouragement of the trial judge. In effect the lawyers were the gamblers and she was merely the stake.

Second, when the jury had been out a long time and returned to review the key medical evidence, they were given the prosecution evidence, repeatedly refused parallel defence evidence and bullied by the judge into returning a verdict without it. It was the most spectacular display of breach of that most fundamental principle of fair trials, parity of arms between prosecution and defence, that I have ever witnessed in a country with a mature justice system.

Justice is always a human activity prone to error even in the best legal systems. One of the characteristics of the great common law tradition is that when serious mistakes are made those in authority strive to rectify the position without delay. Today ("Woodward faces the hardest choice of all", 3 November), the trial judge has the power and opportunity to show that he is both human and in that great tradition.

STEPHEN JAKOBI
Director
The Fair Trials Abroad Trust
Richmond, Surrey

Sir: When I was five and my sister was six (in the mid 1930s), we had a 19-year-old au pair from Germany living with us. On one occasion my mother

dispatched us to the nearby park for an hour or so with "Nanny" in charge. On the way back, my sister was hit by a car. I still remember every detail of the incident vividly. The driver was in no way to blame; only the impatience and inexperience of our au pair. But my parents blamed only themselves for the awful loss of their daughter – most especially my mother, who never entirely recovered.

Whatever Louise Woodward did in frustration to the crying baby in her (unqualified) care, it was not – by any stretch of the imagination – murder as we know it. And the baby's parents, poised in their loss under the televised eyes of the world, refer to this distraught child as "a little actress" and, by implication, a murderer. Does America and its justice system have no shame? Professor DEREK FABIAN
Strathclyde

Sir: Whatever the rights and wrongs of the Louise Woodward trial, the case itself emphasises a stark fact that many of us choose to ignore. In our society, children are a nuisance. They blight careers, they interfere with social life, they are expensive to both the parents and the state, and eventually they turn into teenage vandals. Perhaps we should consider whether children are compatible with life at the end of the 20th century. Better yet, perhaps we should radically alter the attitudes of our society.

BOBBIE NICHOLS
Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Sir: Your assertion that the guilty verdict on Louise Woodward was something that "she herself had contributed to", by asking the jury to consider acquittal or guilty of murder only, is bizarre. Why should Louise plead guilty to manslaughter when she

protests her innocence and when all the evidence is in her favour?

JOHN REARDON
Carlisle, Cumbria

Sir: Louise Woodward might well be an aspiring actress, as the prosecution put it, but if she is guilty then her anguished cry of innocence following the verdict was a performance of Oscar-winning potential.

PAUL DOOLING
Oxford

Cold weather pay

Sir: The fact that the Government has rejected the call for cold weather payments to be triggered by taking into account the additional chilling effect of the wind (report, 1 November) fills me, as I am sure it does every medical practitioner in the country, with a mixture of anger and depression. I practise in a rural area,

in one of England's milder counties, and yet already I have seen the first two cases of hypothermia of the season. Multiplied over the country, the cost of these cases must be considerable. It is a common misconception that the treatment (of those who do not expire) consists only of re-warming. Very often hypothermia results in other illnesses, for example pneumonia or stroke, and the length of stay of such patients in hospital is frequently two weeks or more. Add to this the cost of the additional burden to social services following the patient's discharge.

The saving, by not making this allowance for wind chill, is in the order of £2m to £3m. It is incredible to behold the lack of insight on the part of the Government as to how much money this tiny expenditure would undoubtedly save.

Dr DAVID COCKSHOOT
Frome, Somerset

London traffic

Sir: For someone who has watched the development of thinking over traffic design in London over several decades, it is interesting to read ("The new Battle of Trafalgar", 30 October) of the proposals that have been dreamt up by Norman Foster and Partners for Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square, on which public comment is about to be invited.

The wiser heads at City Hall are well aware of the pointlessness of asking the public to comment on schemes that are simply not feasible. At their meeting of 21 July the Environmental and Planning Committee resolved that "any consideration of the proposals for the so-called Strategy 2 be deferred until such time as HM Government is able to introduce wider proposals for reducing the volume of traffic in Central London". But the client for the study

is not Westminster Council but a consortium of which Westminster is only one member. Thus Westminster was overruled, and the unrealistic Strategy 2 is going forward for public consultation. What a waste of time and effort.

To deplore the more extreme proposals for pedestrianisation in the two squares and in Whitehall does not mean a total indifference to improving facilities for pedestrians. But wholesale pedestrianisation of important traffic arteries is quite another matter. Even if car traffic should be reduced, traffic is still the lifeblood of a city. We must not restrict it unduly, as the extreme schemes would do. And "demand management" of car traffic must be imposed on the approaches to London, not right at the centre.

NIGEL SEYMOUR
Lower Slaughter,
Gloucestershire

Turkey and the EU

Sir: Lord Kennet's letter (30 October) about admitting Turkey to the European Union has missed the reason why all this is happening. It is, more than anything else, US pressure, and the American motives have not all appeared in the British press.

They are: first, to strengthen the military alliance the US is forging between Turkey's new military government and Israel, so that Turkey's considerable might can help Israel in its wars of occupation and that they can together encircle Syria and Lebanon. This the US government does because both US parties are heavily Zionist funded.

Second, to strengthen Turkey's strategic position in obtaining the pipelines to bring oil from the Caspian oil province, which belongs to various countries freed from the Russian empire and now declared an area of "vital national interest", to the US. And third, to strengthen Turkey, which already has the strongest navy in the Black Sea, in its role of annoying Russia there.

ELIZABETH ADAMS
London W2

Sir: According to the Zurich and London treaties of 1959 establishing the bi-communal Republic of Cyprus, Turkish Cypriots have the right to participate in any discussions connected with the foreign affairs of "Cyprus" and veto any adverse decisions. Turkey, like the UK and Greece, as a guarantor power, has the treaty right to be consulted about the future of the island (report, 27 October).

HAKKI MUFTUZADE
London Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
London WC1

Cheesy education

Sir: In her admirable account of the merits of Summerhill school (28 October), Angela Neustatter complains that her education there "resembled a Gruyère cheese".

The same is true of education everywhere. The one distinctive lesson that everyone learns in conventional schools is how important it is to appear to know what you do not know.

DAVID GRIBBLE
Bristol

I'd love to, but I've got this column to write for The Independent



MILES KINGTON

What is it that we need a lot of and only have a few of?

Good excuses, that's what. The trouble is that we spend half our waking life trying to get out of things and we usually have no escape hatch to get out by.

Well, today I bring you good news in the shape of a whole bunch of excuses to store away in your personal organiser.

Yes, whenever the words, "Gosh, I'd LOVE to but I'm afraid I can't because..." form on your lips, you can now complete your sentence with one of the following:

1. "I've had a rather painful accident with a rubber band which I would rather not talk about."
2. "It would interfere with my preparations for the World Cup."
3. "It's that time of year again."
4. "I would prefer not to, not if there is any truth in what Alistair Cooke said last Sunday."

5. "Well, it was a very large rubber band."
6. "I'm double-booked with a man in Pottery Barn."
7. "I'm going to my aromatherapist's funeral."
8. "I'm going to a very important village Millennium meeting."
9. "That's the day I'm having my cyst looked at."
10. "No, not cistern – cyst."
11. "I've promised to act as second in a duel that day, which I've never done before."
12. "I have to keep that day clear for organic recharging."
13. "My wife has gone away for some time and she seems to have taken the diary with her, so I can't fix anything."
14. "Oh, that's St Ursula's Day... Sorry."
15. "That's the day I'm having my cistern looked at."
16. "No, not sister – cistern."
17. "The old trouble is playing up again, I'm afraid."

18. "That's exactly when I've had to pencil in a dry run for my income tax investigation."
19. "Apparently there's a place in Banbury where they still do evening classes on how to be a second in duels."
20. "No, St Ursula."
21. "Well, aromatherapists die too, you know. You can postpone death with pretty smells but you can't cancel it."
22. "The awful thing is that I've just forgotten how to swim and there's a man in Le Touquet who specialises in bringing the skill back, and that's the only day I could get a flight there."
23. "That's the day my ginger beer matures, and it's a non-stop vigil."
24. "Well, much though I'd like to, I can't ring my wife because she's taken the phone book as well."
25. "I'm afraid my old trouble isn't playing up any more, and the doctors are a bit worried and want to see why."

26. "Yes, they use a lot of fragrances at aromatherapist's funerals."
27. "Well, there's a lot more to it than just saying 'Choose your weapons, gentlemen, you know.'"
28. "Kitty Kelley wants to come and see me that day and she won't say what it's about."
29. "All our systems have crashed and that's the day the man's coming to have a look at them."
30. "Not cisterns. Systems."
31. "Did I say St Ursula? I meant St Boniface."
32. "I don't think the fragrances do much for the late departed, but they do the funeral guests a lot of good."
33. "I couldn't possibly, not with the Hang Seng in its present delicate state."
34. "This excuse can be varied with the French lorry drivers' strike, shadow Cabinet crisis etc."
35. "That's the day I am due to have a ses-

- sion with my hypnotist, and once I have made an appointment with my hypnotist, there is some strong unseen power which seems to prevent me ever changing it. Odd, really."
36. "No, hold on – that's Glenda Jackson's birthday. I never miss that."
37. "That's the day the piano tuner comes, and you can't get hold of piano tuners for love nor money these days, so I must be sure to be there, because he tunes everything in the house, not just the piano and spinet but everything from guitars to cisterns."
38. "I have recently contracted that disease..."
39. "You know, that disease, that disease which never lets you get round to finishing..."
40. "I can't remember the name of it, but it's the disease which prevents you from ever... from ever..."

21/COMMENT

Flying the flag for a lower Scottish grant



**DONALD
MACINTYRE**
DEVOLUTION'S
HIDDEN COST

It's there in the St George's flags that England football fans increasingly wave at internationals. It's there in the call among a quietly growing number of thinking right-wing Tories for an English parliament to match those for Scotland and Wales (see David Davis, below). And it's there in the subterranean restiveness among a few quite senior English Labour politicians about the distribution of public expenditure between the component parts of the United Kingdom. It may not yet qualify as a backlash. But Englishness in politics, as in football, is starting, post-devolution, to have a slightly harder edge.

Imagine it's millennium year. Gordon Brown's two-year ban on any spending increase over the levels set by the previous government no longer applies. Real live public expenditure negotiations are now happening in earnest once again. David Blunkett, Jack Straw and Harriet Harman are fighting against the Treasury (dominated, as it happens, by Scottish ministers) for more money for schools, policemen and child care. They form a cabal and start discreetly muttering to friendly English Labour backbenchers that they there would be plenty more money to go round if only Scotland wasn't quite so well off. Why, the well-informed backbenchers start asking in public, does Scotland have to enjoy public spending 14.3 per cent higher per head than the average UK figure? After all, there is now a Scottish Parliament with tax-raising powers and the freedom to allocate spending. Isn't it time England and Wales got their fair share?

This isn't fantasy. It's the stuff of Cabinet infighting. Which is one reason why the Treasury Select Committee was prescient last week in announcing a short inquiry into why the Barnett spending formula allocates spending more generously to Scotland. The Government's present policy, as expressed in the White Paper on Scottish devolution, is rather firmly in favour of the current block grant system which it says has produced "fair settlements" for Scotland. This was not the view that all English ministers took in the run-up to devolution. The Constitution Unit, in its own authoritative study of devolution, had recommended that an independent commission should examine the whole system. But Donald Dewar,



The Saltire flaps from the bow of the ferry which sails from Uig on Skye to Lochmaddy on North Uist

Photograph: Brian Harris

The people of England deserve a referendum of their own



**DAVID
DAVIS**
AN ENGLISH
PARLIAMENT

Those members of Parliament at Westminster who are committed to preserving the United Kingdom have to face a ferociously difficult question. Now that the Scots and Welsh have decided on devolution, how do we deliver a fair deal for England?

William Hague has quite rightly announced that an incoming Conservative government would respect the outcome of the referendums. But Labour's compromise proposals are a constitutional mess. They do not solve the so-called West Lothian question, the problem of Scottish MPs voting on matters that solely affect the English, whilst the English MPs cannot vote on similar matters that solely affect the Scots.

Nobody could doubt that the English feel as passionately about their country

as the Scots or the Welsh. The best demonstration of this is the extent to which the English have been willing to make sacrifices in the interests of the Union: for example, on the basis of population, Scotland has 14 more MPs than it would have with the English size of constituencies. In terms of public expenditure, Wales receives one-sixth more money than England, Scotland a fifth more, and Northern Ireland a third more.

There are, of course, reasons for these differences, and the English have accepted them because most people place enormous value on the Union. They recognise the energy that the United Kingdom has gained from the amalgamation of the talents of all parts of the Kingdom.

Which is why Labour's proposals are potentially so disastrous. The Government is meddling with a finely balanced structure which has historically worked to everybody's advantage. It is taking the risk of starting a process that will unravel the tightly woven fabric of our country.

Those Welsh people who want an assembly will resent the stronger Scottish institution. As for the English, Labour's attempt to provide supposed fairness with regional councils is, of course, nonsense. It will not solve the West Lothian question. It will simply create soulless regional bureaucracies, bleak outposts of Brussels.

Nobody could with any serious constitutional sense equate, say, a Yorkshire and Humberside regional council with the Scottish Parliament. The constitutional mess of potage that we are being offered in exchange for our heritage and history

is not going to satisfy anyone. It is no accident that Labour's proposals fit well with the wishes of the European Commission. In the federalist lexicon, the nation state is seen as the source of many evils, from unemployment to war.

The nation state is the strongest manifestation of the democratic will of the people. It is a moral concept, indissolubly tied to the emotional identity of the people; it is not an administrative convenience to suit Labour's apparent urge to bypass Westminster by every means possible.

The people of England deserve nothing less than equal treatment. And the people of Britain deserve a constitutional settlement that is at least logical. If each of the other nations of the United Kingdom is going to have its own parliament, then England's choice should be no less. If Labour truly believes that this is the proper future for the people of Scotland and Wales, their logic must mean the same for England. This means equal treatment in all respects, not just financial – although we should have funding equality for England, Scotland and Wales.

The people of England deserve a referendum on whether they want a Parliament of their own. In their own words, Labour should trust the people – in this case the people of England. Anything less will lead to disaffection and discontent; to a belief that the English are being treated as second-class citizens in their own land.

The writer is Conservative MP for Boothferry.

fact that public expenditure has been contained rather than expanded since the early 1980s. Which is one reason why Joel Barnett has himself come out in favour of change. If nothing else it looks to many experts as if the northern English regions are left relatively worse off than Scotland, and that if Barnett-style convergence had been achieved, it might have been possible to extract some £2bn from the Scottish spending totals.

This is a potentially explosive problem, particularly if you happen to believe in the Union. Nothing could be more calculated to fuel the Scottish nationalist cause than exacting a price for devolution through a raid on the block grant. On the other hand, English discontent could well intensify when the debate on public spending begins in earnest. (It's even possible, by the way, that Davis's deeply controversial idea of an English parliament might appear in time to some Labour MPs.)

You can already find English ministers cheerfully devising, in private, a long-term Catch 22 argument for cutting the Scottish block grant: if the Scottish Parliament decides to increase taxes then they should have the equivalent grant deducted to avoid an overall increase in public spending. If it cut taxes then the grant should still be reduced, on the grounds that the English cannot be expected to subsidise Scottish tax cuts. Needing to strike a delicate balance the Government might be well advised to call for a full-scale, and no doubt lengthy, inquiry. As it happens, the devolution White Paper, in a passage that some attribute to Jack Straw, holds out the possibility of a review when it stresses that any "substantial revision" would have to be carried out "in full consultation" with the Scottish executive. Sometimes, if the bough is not to break, it has to bend.

It's instrumental to everything

**DIANA
HINDS**
LEARNING
AND MUSIC

For those people lucky enough to play an instrument, music is an enjoyable and even uplifting pastime. But it is not, educationally, a luxury. Schools which persist in regarding instrumental lessons as a pleasant add-on, limiting them to those who can afford to pay, cut music at their peril.

The crisis in instrumental tuition, reported yesterday by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, comes at a time of mounting evidence about the ways in which music helps children with many fundamental aspects of their learning.

Music helps children learn to read. It helps them make progress in maths. It raises their motivation, it builds and reinforces their self-esteem, and it fosters their ability to work cooperatively with others. In fact, it does almost everything we need to be doing in the classroom.

Later in life, many employers will pay heed to a job applicant with musical experience – not because they want string quartets in the lunch-hour, but because playing an instrument is a good indicator of someone who can apply themselves and work in a team.

Music means learning to listen. Whether you are listening to a piece to pick out a particular theme or instrument, or trying to play an instrument in tune and with a good tone, music demands a uniquely concentrated and focused way of listening. The more sophisticated an instrument you play – a violin, say, as opposed to a simple percussion instrument – the more keenly you have to use your ears.

Learning music is very similar to the way in which children learn language: to be able to communicate, they must be able to listen, to absorb a code and to repeat

back particular patterns. It should come as no surprise, then, that an activity which encourages this capacity to listen is likely to aid the development of a child's spoken and written language.

Recent research from Fribourg University in Switzerland, based on a three-year study of 1,200 children aged seven to 15, found that children given extra music lessons performed better in language work than children given only one music lesson a week, and were no worse at maths, despite having spent less time on the subject. Younger children given extra music learnt to read more easily. All classes with extra music exhibited markedly less tension, and greater cooperation.

In maths, there is increasing evidence that music helps to develop mental skills integral to mathematics, such as ordering. A research study in Providence, Rhode Island, found that children who were given special music and art lessons, emphasising "sequenced skill development", performed better in maths tests.

Another study, earlier this year, by scientists at the universities of California and Wisconsin, suggested a direct link between musical activities and scientific reasoning. The researchers believe that the process of translating musical notes from a staff into actions on a keyboard stimulates and may even create the complex neural networks the child will use to solve maths and science problems.

The scientific evidence provides invaluable back-up for what many teachers have known for a long time: that children benefit in many diverse ways from learning music. Playing an instrument also provides a passport to still more enriching activity: making music in a group, such as an orchestra or band.

Music is, and must be, for everyone. For those who cannot afford to pay, help must be made available. A return to the days when playing an instrument was merely a necessary "accomplishment" for affluent young ladies would be a tragedy from which we would never recover.

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BE THE BEST

Should Nelson and Churchill look down on car-free zones?



**ANDREAS
WHITTAM
SMITH**
LIBERATING
LONDON

Why does it require personages of the rank of Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State or Culture to launch a public consultation on closing parts of London squares to traffic? At a press conference tomorrow morning, John Prescott and Chris Smith, accompanied by one of the world's best arch-

itects, Sir Norman Foster, will describe proposals to ban vehicles from the north side of Trafalgar Square, where the National Gallery stands, and likewise to close the south side of Parliament Square, next to Westminster Abbey. They will also outline a second option which would ban all traffic except buses from the east side (dominated by St Martin-in-the-Fields) and take a more generous, pro-pedestrian approach to Whitehall and Parliament Square.

Both plans include smaller proposals for the surrounding streets, to help people move around more easily, ease the path of cyclists and improve the appearance of the area. Trees would be established; the magnificent courtyards of the Treasury and the Foreign Office would be opened to the public; Old Palace Yard, currently a car park for the House of Lords, would become a new square.

Ministers' involvement is appropriate, for this concerns the very heart of the nation, the seat of government, ceremonial

routes and, in Trafalgar Square, the place for great open-air meetings and demonstrations.

The Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey are together classified as a World Heritage Site, on a par with the Pyramids and the Taj Mahal. The initiative is of historic importance, too, because for the first time the Government is enlisted in the task of restraining the motor car in city centres. It is just about 100 years since cars first began to traverse the north side of Trafalgar Square and terrify pedestrians wishing to cross to the paved centre, with Nelson's Column and the pigeons.

The genesis of the two plans was a huge public meeting organised by the Architecture Foundation and the Evening Standard in April last year, at which Tony Blair spoke, and where Sir Norman floated the notion that the time had come to start removing cars from the centre of London. A few weeks later, three Conservative ministers, John Gummer, Virginia Bottomley and Sir George Young, decided to stage a com-

petition to select a team for studying the area with a view to producing proposals – which Sir Norman duly won. The transition between the previous government and the present one has been seamless. It has become a bipartisan policy.

But Sir Norman and his architectural practice did not win on their own. Sir Norman leads a consortium containing Halcrow Fox, road traffic consultants, and Space Syntax Laboratory, which studies the way people move around cities. Readers walking along Whitehall from Trafalgar Square to Westminster Abbey this summer who thought they were being followed, probably were.

It may seem obvious that architect, traffic planner and pedestrian analyst should work together, but until now it has rarely been undertaken. While Space Syntax was watching where people walk, Halcrow Fox was plotting the consequences for private traffic. The upshot would not be gridlocked streets in the centre; rather, the effects would ripple outwards

spectre, secured a series of relatively favourable public spending settlements. By linking the Scottish block grant directly to the UK-wide totals, Barnett intended to bring Scottish per capita expenditure more closely into line with that of England and Wales. Instead the opposite happened, for reasons which are complicated but include a relative decline in the Scottish population and the

No buildings will be pulled down, no new structures erected, no roads diverted. All the proposed interventions are small scale.

In one important respect, the London proposals exceed what is being done, for example, in Berlin or Barcelona, and that it is in the amount of consultation. Berlin is being rebuilt as it was in the 19th century, without the public having much of a say. The same goes for Barcelona, where a strong mayor has had his way – albeit to good effect.

This is not the London method. Already 130 organisations and statutory bodies have been consulted. While Westminster Abbey, for instance, would welcome the removal of traffic from directly outside its walls, the Queen

Elizabeth Conference Centre on the other side of the square has expressed concern about access for the thousands of people who attend meetings there. Now the general public is also to be consulted.

Whether to approve, turns on a number of issues. Do we want to find a new balance between the car on the one hand, and pedestrians and public transport on the other? If we do move against the car, are we willing to accept the increased congestion, and higher costs for business, in surrounding areas? Or do we believe that making the inner city more attractive would bring in more visitors and thus yield counter-balancing economic gains?

So important are questions like these that the nearer the politicians have got to the period for public consultation, the clearer they seem to have become about the primacy of people's desires. That is why they are launching the initiative themselves. Moreover, without public support, nothing will go forward.

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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

Resurgent share prices boost confidence around globe

Cautious optimism returned to the financial markets yesterday. Diane Coyle in London and Stephen Vines in Hong Kong report on a bounce in the world's stock markets as fresh signs of strong economic growth in the US and UK bolstered investors' confidence.

Comparisons of the ups and downs in world stock markets to a roller-coaster started to look like real understatement as share prices bounced back around much of the globe yesterday.

The FTSE 100 index ended up 64 points at 4,906.4, while the Dow Jones index was up 158 points at 7,600.23 by midday. In Asia, Hong Kong and Singapore made gains of 6 per cent and 7 per cent respectively.

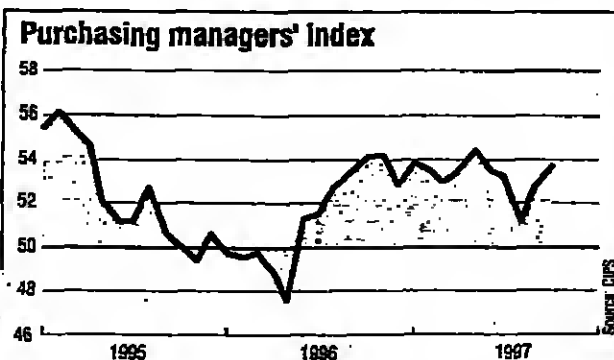
In the UK and US the impetus came from surveys showing that both economies are expanding rapidly. The monthly survey of purchasing managers in manufacturing by Britain's Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply showed a rise in output and orders in industry last month despite the continuing strength of the pound. The results, which put manufacturing activity at its highest for six months and showed the first rise in overseas orders since June, seemed to confound gloomy predictions that the exchange rate

was bound to start damaging exports.

David Bloom, an economist at James Capel in London, said: "We have found that industry can live with a pound around DM2.90. If it were going to hammer exports, it should have happened by now."

Peter Thomson, director general of the CIPS, said: "Britain's manufacturing sector continues to show solid growth."

Alongside yesterday's survey came official figures showing a pick-up in the growth of M0, the narrow money measure consisting mainly of cash, to 6.4 per cent, and a report from the Halifax of a 0.4 per cent rise in house prices last month. Although the Halifax's index showed annual house price inflation of only 5.4 per cent, less than half the rate



reported by the Nationwide, the lender said it showed that a "modest recovery" in the housing market was continuing.

The figures led many analysts to say the Bank of England would have to raise interest rates at some point in the near

future. But most think the Monetary Policy Committee will not make the move after its meeting tomorrow and Thursday because of the recent stock market instability.

Although a rise this month would now surprise commen-

tators, the financial markets reacted to yesterday's economic news by taking the pound higher. It climbed two pence to just over DM2.91, little affected by a comment from Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, that the UK should be considered to be preparing for eventual membership of the single currency.

Across the Atlantic, the parallel survey of the National Association of Purchasing Managers, showed an unexpected jump in manufacturing activity in October. An increase in orders and output took the index well into what is normally considered boom territory.

As in the UK, however, analysts reckon that an expected increase in interest rates will be postponed until the episode of

stock market turbulence is over. In Asia, analysts predicted that investors would start to pay closer attention to the merits of different markets rather than taking a negative view of Asia as a whole.

"The region seems to be settling into good cases and bad cases rather than assuming that everything's linked in an identical way," said John Mulcahy, managing director of the W I Carr brokerage in Hong Kong.

There was some evidence for this view yesterday as some stock markets, including Hong Kong and Singapore, roared ahead, while the Thai and Philippines markets did little other than tread water.

The Singaporean government was even feeling confident enough to shrug off its own cur-

rency woes, backing moves yesterday to shore up the ailing Indonesian currency. This gained almost 6 per cent against the US dollar thanks to the massive package of overseas loans totalling some \$38bn.

In Hong Kong there was a feeling "that things have been overdone," according to Howard Georges, the vice-chairman of South China Securities.

Confidence in the Chinese economy has grown too. The easiest way for investors to get a stake in this market is through the Hong Kong stock exchange where yesterday "red chip" recorded a 13 per cent rise.

But investor unease seemed to be focusing firmly on Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea because of political uncertainties.

Liberty family attacks board decision to sell up after 125 years of retailing

The 'for sale' sign was yesterday hoisted over Liberty, the upmarket retailer. The company's board took the decision to prevent Liberty's founding family and a rebel shareholder from trying to win control of the group without paying a premium price. Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports.

Liberty would be valued at £84m at yesterday's closing share price, which soared 25p to 377.5p. Nick Bubb, retail analyst at Société Générale Strauss Turnbull, said possible buyers of the Regent Street retailer could include House of Fraser, which owns the Dickens & Jones and DH Evans department stores, and Great

Universal Stores, the mail-order group which owns Buxberry and Scotch House. GUS has sufficient cash resources for a bid and has been rumoured to be interested in expanding its high street retailing interests.

Other buyers could include Alders, the department store group which has been looking for a central London flagship store, and Harvey Nichols, the Knightsbridge store group which has been expanding fast. Another possible buyer would be Harrods, the Knightsbridge department store group owned by Mohamed Al Fayed. Overseas buyers keen on snapping up a trophy London asset may also be interested.

The plan to seek buyers for the 125-year-old company was attacked by the Stewart-Liberty family which has aligned itself with Bryan Myerson, a rebel shareholder. The two groups, which between them account for 44 per cent of the shares,

said they would press ahead with their plans to oust Denis Cassidy as chairman and appoint Mr Myerson and Odile Griffith, the family's financial adviser, as joint chairmen.

Liberty's managing director, Ian Thomson, said the board was seeking to act in the interests of all shareholders. It criticised the Stewart-Liberty family and Mr Myerson for attempting to gain control without paying a premium and without giving other shareholders the opportunity to exit. "We believe that it is improper in terms of corporate governance."

"The company is in much better shape than it was 18 months ago. There could be a number of companies that would be interested."

The board revealed yesterday that in June Mr Myerson had proposed that a shell company be established to take over Liberty. Mr Cassidy and the two

other executive directors, Ian Thomson and Andrew Garety, would have been granted a 10 per cent stake between them. The board said the bid would have diluted the Stewart-Liberty shareholding.

The board rejected the proposal though Mr Myerson then made a second proposal in July. This would have involved separating the retailing and wholesaling operations of Liberty from the property, brand and licensing interests.

This revised plan would have included a share option scheme which Mr Myerson claimed could have yielded £8.3m to the three executive directors over five years.

The board said this would also have diluted the family shareholding.

However, the family and Mr Myerson confirmed yesterday that they will stick to an irrevocable undertaking to act in concert for six months.

Extra £400m from Guinness-GrandMet



Tony Greener: 'Disposal of brands to win approval will not impact on profits'

Guinness and Grand Metropolitan yesterday raised the proposed special payment to shareholders from 60p to 70p a share if they approve the merger at extraordinary general meetings to be held on 26 November. The extra payment confirmed in circulars to shareholders will increase the total value of the cash rebate from £2.4bn to £2.8bn.

Shareholders in both companies will receive next February 864 Diageo shares and 136 B shares, with a cash value of 70p each for every 1,000 shares they now hold in either company. The B shares can be cashed in free of charges and counted as a capital gain.

Alternatively, shareholders can elect to keep the B shares, which will earn a variable dividend based on 75 per cent of the current three month LIBOR rate in the London money markets, but as soon as 75 per cent of the issue has been cashed, Diageo will have the right to convert all remaining B shares to ordinary shares at the equivalent market value at the time.

Neither GrandMet nor Guinness will pay a final dividend, but in addition to the special bonus Diageo will pay an interim dividend of 12.5p in April 1998. This includes an interim payment of 7.2p and a one-off payment of 5.3p to reflect the change in the GrandMet year-end from 30 September and the Guinness year-end from 31 December to the new Diageo year-end on 30 June.

Diageo will then pay a final dividend next November which is expected to be not less than 10.8p. Payments have been calculated so that no shareholder is worse off although GrandMet shareholders may be marginally better off, advisers said yesterday.

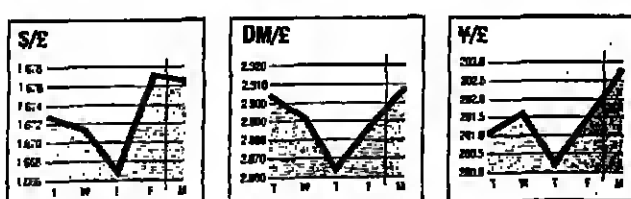
The agreement last month to dispose of various brands including Dewar's whisky in Europe in order to win approval for the merger from the European Commission, will not have any material impact on profits, Tony Greener, the Guinness chairman, told shareholders yesterday.

The two companies are also expected to sacrifice Dewar's, one of the biggest selling whisky brands in the US in order to win clearance from the FTC in the US. This decision may not be known until the shareholder meetings have been held. Any additional disposals the US authorities may require will not, however, reduce pro forma profits by more than 5 per cent.

Subject to shareholder approval the merger will take effect and dealings in Diageo shares will start on 17 December 1997. GrandMet shares rose 6.5p to 544.5p yesterday and Guinness gained 14.5p to 547.5p.

— Clifford German
Outlook, page 25

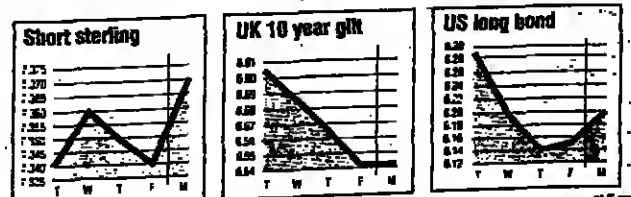
STOCK MARKETS



Indices

| Index | Close | Change | % | 52 wk high | 52 wk low | Yield (%) |
|------------------|----------|--------|------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| FTSE 100 | 4906.40 | 64.10 | 1.32 | 5330.80 | 3900.40 | 3.55 |
| FTSE 250 | 4663.60 | 20.40 | 0.44 | 4963.80 | 4348.10 | 3.44 |
| FTSE 350 | 2368.40 | 26.90 | 1.15 | 2555.30 | 1949.20 | 3.53 |
| FTSE All Share | 2325.13 | 31.26 | 1.36 | 2492.41 | 1925.79 | 3.50 |
| FTSE SmallCap | 2220.12 | 8.00 | 0.35 | 2408.20 | 2128.40 | 3.21 |
| FTSE Real Estate | 1267.7 | 6.00 | 0.48 | 1346.50 | 1138.70 | 3.54 |
| FTSE AIM | 1267.7 | 6.00 | 0.48 | 1346.50 | 1138.70 | 3.54 |
| Dow Jones | 7600.23 | 158 | 2.17 | 8259.31 | 6041.68 | 1.76 |
| Nikkei | 16458.94 | unch | - | 21418.25 | 16312.69 | 0.90 |
| Hong Kong | 11255.11 | 631.33 | 5.94 | 16873.27 | 9059.89 | 3.08 |
| S&P 500 | 3854.07 | 127.38 | 3.42 | 4438.93 | 2671.86 | 2.87 |

INTEREST RATES



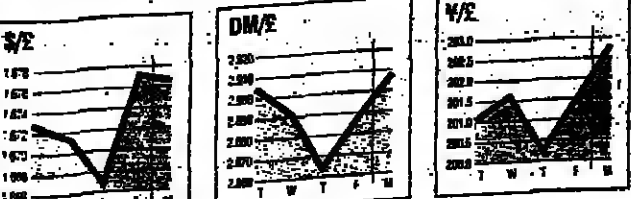
Bond Yields

| Index | 3 month | 1 year | 10 year | 15 year | 1 year | 10 year | 15 year |
|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| UK | 7.39 | 7.56 | 0.88 | 6.54 | -1.16 | 6.51 | -1.43 |
| US | 6.75 | 5.94 | 0.22 | 5.86 | -0.45 | 6.20 | -0.48 |
| Japan | 0.53 | 0.03 | -0.57 | -0.04 | 1.82 | -0.79 | 2.41 |
| Germany | 3.69 | 0.52 | 4.08 | 0.74 | 5.02 | -0.41 | 6.25 |

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

| Rises | Price (¢) | Qty (¢) | % Chg | Falls | Price (¢) | Qty (¢) | % Chg |
|------------|-----------|---------|-------|-----------------|-----------|---------|-------|
| Blotech | 107.50 | 6.00 | 5.91 | Legal and Gen | 483.00 | 12.00 | -3.83 |
| HSBC Hldgs | 1475.00 | 75.00 | 5.50 | Next | 687.00 | -28.00 | -3.15 |
| CRG Group | 338.00 | 16.00 | 4.87 | Reckitt and Col | 887.50 | -27.00 | -2.75 |
| BTR | 211.50 | 10.25 | 4.78 | Scottish Power | 441.00 | -5.00 | -2.85 |

CURRENCIES



Other Indicators

| Index | Close | Change | % | 52 wk high | 52 wk low | Yield (%) |
|--------|--------|--------|-------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Dollar | 1.6769 | -0.006 | -0.36 | 1.5444 | 1.7347 | 0.0081 |
| D-Mark | 2.9090 | +1.56p | 0.54 | 2.4854 | 2.9090 | 11.88 |
| Yen | 202.84 | +0.02 | 0.01 | 197.13 | 202.84 | 97.00 |

Mack makes swift departure from United Assurance

United Assurance yesterday stunned investors by announcing the abrupt departure of George Mack, group chief executive. Andrew Verity discovers that other directors last week called a board meeting to discuss the future of Dr Mack, who took the helm of the group when it was formed from the merger of United Friendly and Refuge Assurance a year ago.

John Cudworth, non-executive chairman, confirmed yesterday that Dr Mack did not initiate the decision to call a board meeting last week to discuss his future. However, when the issue of his future was raised Dr Mack decided to go.

In a statement, the company said: "With successful completion of the integration now approaching, Dr Mack has decided to pursue opportunities elsewhere."

"The board looks forward to appointing a new group chief executive to take the group forward from the excellent platform created by the merger."

United Assurance said he had been in charge of the merger, which was now approaching successful completion.

Analysts yesterday came up with a long list of names to succeed Dr Mack. The list largely comprises a string of senior executives who have recently left top jobs in the life insurance sector. They include Jim Sutcliffe, chief executive of the Prudential's UK life insurance options until five weeks ago, and Steve Melcher, the American who formerly headed up Eagle Star Life, the BAT subsidiary.

Dr Mack has come under heavy pressure from investors in United Assurance who have been increasingly irritated by the group's slow handling of the merger.

Under the merger terms, 160 of 279 branches will be shut. A total of more than 2,200 employees, or a third of staff, will have lost their jobs by the time the restructuring is complete.

In the last 12 months, the group's share price has underperformed its sector of life insurance by 22 per cent. While new business is flooding into other life insurers, who are seeing rises of more than 20 per cent year on year, United Assurance's sales dropped by 5 per cent in the first six months of 1997.

Shareholders have also become irritated by a bungled attempt to venture outside United's core business of door-to-door collections of insurance premiums. One of the poorer expansion moves was the acquisition of United Friendly Financial Planning, which was bought from American Express in 1993 for £14m and was recently sold to Friends Provident at a loss of £2m.

This followed an earlier flop which saw United Friendly wind-down a motor insurance underwriter but fail to make enough provision for liabilities. The group has also doubled its provision for pension mis-selling to £150m.

Deutsche Telekom rules out Racal bid

Racal's hopes of gaining a premium price for its telecommunications business faded yesterday when it emerged that Deutsche Telekom, the world's third-largest telecommunications group, had declined to bid for the network.

At least one other continental telecommunications giant, Telecom Italia, had examined making a provisional offer before last month's deadline for bids, but has also backed away. AT&T, the world's second-largest telecommunications group, is frequently tipped to buy a UK network, but has also taken an interest in the sale but has declined not to make an offer.

Deutsche was thought to be considering buying a 60 per cent stake in Racal Telecom, leaving Racal with the remaining 40 per cent in a deal which would value the telecommunications and data network at around £575m. However, industry watchers had doubted Deutsche's intentions because the company is also expected to include Cable & Wireless in its Global One alliance with France Telecom and Sprint of the US, a move which would give the German group access to C&W's own UK network.

The decision by Deutsche not to launch a formal bid leaves just one confirmed contender in the running - Duncan Lewis, the former senior Granada executive and chief executive of the old Mercury phones business. Mr Lewis has been backed by Schroder Ventures, the venture capital arm of the merchant bank and is thought to be offering around £450m for all of the business.

Sir Ernest Harrison, Racal's long-standing chairman, announced the review of the future of Racal Telecom and the group's data products division in June after a string of profit warnings dented the company's share price. Merrill Lynch, the US investment bank, was appointed to search for partners

for the telecoms business, though Racal has not ruled out a sale of the whole division. Racal Telecom is one of the UK's largest networks, with 5,700km of optical fibre and 7,000km of copper wire. It includes the old British Rail telecommunications operation, which runs alongside railway tracks, which Racal bought for £130m in 1995.

— Chris Godsmark

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY NIGEL COPE

ABF a haven for the nervous

In these times of market volatility, Associated British Foods is the kind of company nervous investors should find attractive. Well-managed, cash-rich and with a collection of stable businesses with good market shares, Garry Weston's company is the classic defensive stock. Interestingly, ABF tends to be a poor performer in late bull markets.

The shares have underperformed the market so far this year and were a shocking performer in 1997 ahead of the crash.

The reasoning is that, as bull markets gather pace, a safe stock like ABF starts to look a little boring. But over the long run, its attractions are undeniable. In the past five years the shares have risen from 210p to 481p, an out-performance of nearly 20 per cent.

Yesterday's figures were in line with expectations with full-year profits of £850m bloated by a £424m gain from the sale of its Irish supermarkets interests to Tesco earlier in the year.

Stripping out that figure, underlying profits from continuing businesses rose by £35m to £401m though the currency impact knocked £39m from that total. British Sugar's profits fell from £183m to £179m.

Though currency factors will continue to dent the figures in the first half, the longer-term issue for ABF is how it will spend its £1.5bn cash pile which earned a return of just 7 per cent in the year. The company did bid for parts of the Unilever speciality chemicals operations which were sold to ICI earlier this year. Mr Weston is also likely to be interested in Dalgety's food ingredients business, which is up for sale and could fetch £300m.

The £43m special dividend hints that more funds will be returned to shareholders though the City will be looking for deals to enhance earnings.

Of course, ABF has not been idle on the investment front.

It made 10 minor acquisitions, totalling £60m, last year and invested a

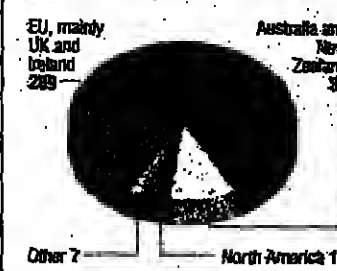
Associated British Foods: At a glance

Market value: £4.23bn, share price 481p (+1p)

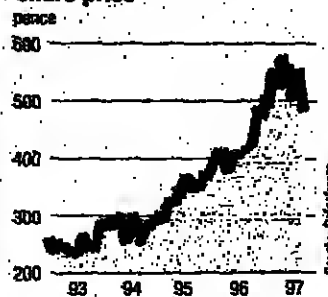
| Five-year record | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Turnover (£bn) | 4.4 | 4.5 | 4.9 | 5.7 | 5.2 |
| Pre-tax profits (£m) | 355 | 382 | 375 | 430 | 350 |
| Earnings per share (p) | 25.4 | 34.4 | 27.8 | 31.0 | 25.6 |
| Dividends per share (p) | 7.5 | 8.0 | 8.75 | 9.5 | 10.0 |

Profits by region

Year ended 13 September 1997, £m



Share price



further £250m in existing businesses. Emerging markets such as China, Indonesia and Thailand look promising areas for expansion.

On full-year forecasts of £433m, the shares trade on a forward rating of 15. With the shares well off their summer peak, they look good value.

Blacks boosts its performance

Blacks Leisure Group, the sports equipment and fashion retailer, has been something of a sporting success for investors. The shares have outperformed the sector by nearly 20 per cent in the past year, though at 442.5p, up 5.5p yesterday, they are still some way off the heady 549p reached in the early summer.

Yesterday's results for the six months to the end of August show that the company is still growing, albeit at a somewhat slower pace. Profit before tax increased by 36 per cent to £5.3m, and the interim dividend jumped 40 per

cent to 1.75p a share. Although analysts were impressed by progress, the figures were slightly below some expectations. A rise in "administration costs" to £867,000 from £429,000 in the same period last year caused some concern. Blacks said these were one-off costs associated with investment in marketing and the establishment of a long-term incentive scheme.

There was some speculation that the ActiveVenture format may not have been doing as well as expected. Blacks declined to reveal like-for-like sales in the division.

Blacks was not so reticent about First Sport, which delivered another strong performance, with like-for-like sales up 11 per cent, despite strong trading during the European Football Championships last year. Observers believe there is still demand for brands such as Nike and Reebok as fashion items. Blacks is making sure customers won't have to look far: at the end of August, the group had 126 stores, up from 98 the previous year. By the year end, 138 outlets should be open.

Société Générale Strauss Turnbull is nudging up its forecast for the year

to February 1998 to £13.5m. That means Blacks is trading on a forward p/e ratio of 15. Compared to rivals such as JTB Sports, that looks attractive.

Prowling has good foundations

These are heady days for house-builders after the long recession of the early Nineties, with average house prices rising faster than the cost of building, making new homes simultaneously more attractive to buyers and more profitable to builders.

Prowling, one of the smaller quoted house-builders, is no exception. Even after an exceptional charge of £700,000, pre-tax profits trebled in the six months to the end of August to £6.8m. Sales jumped by one-quarter to 798 units and the average selling price rose by just under 6 per cent to £94,800. Operating margins doubled to 11.3 per cent.

Magnus Homes, acquired in February, accounted for 200 units sold and contributed £2m to operating profits, before factoring in the interest charge on the £12.6m cost of the acquisition. The extra sales helped Prowling cut back on part-exchange sales, boost prices and increase margin.

Magnus also brought in tax losses which reduce the tax charge to a sustainable 22 per cent.

Land costs are rising but a three-year land bank has been maintained and sales this year should reach 1,750 units. Broker Pamure Gordon has up-graded forecasts for the current year from £14.5m to £16.25m, equivalent to 15.3p of earnings, excluding the exceptional item.

The shares rose 4.5p to 117.5p yesterday, still some way off their 12-month high of 143.5p in February. That is less than eight times prospective earnings, a rating which still reflects heavy losses in the recession and the narrowness of the market because of the majority stake in the hands of family members. Buy.

Court to protect Sanyo Securities

Sanyo Securities has become the first stockbroker in Japan's post-war history to file for bankruptcy protection from creditors. The ministry of finance has mounted a rescue operation, writes Andrew Verity.

Hiroshi Mituzuka, the Japanese finance minister, called for calm and order yesterday after Sanyo announced it had obtained court protection from its creditors. Senior management at the leading Japanese broker will resign following a board meeting yesterday which concluded a rescue was impossible without court protection. The company will today begin to return funds to customers.

Japan's finance ministry is spearheading a rescue operation and has announced that big creditors, including Nomura Securities, the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi, Daiwa Bank and Nippon Credit Bank, will contribute to a ¥9m fund to ensure depositors are repaid.

Mr Mituzuka said the decision "wasn't a result of the company's regular business operations". Instead, it stemmed from the bursting of Japan's economic bubble in the early 1990s and continual stock market falls.

Yasuo Matsushita, governor of the Bank of Japan, said: "We have been informed that customer property, including cash from customers, will be protected and that they will be returned swiftly."

The immediate trigger for Sanyo's decision was a refusal by nine top Japanese life insurers to give Sanyo more time to repay a string of subordi-

nated loans. On Friday, Nippon Life Insurance and Dai-ichi Mutual Life said the loans could not be extended. With only a year to go to repayment on 31 October 1998, the loans were no longer regarded as capital but as short-term debt. This pushed Sanyo's capital ratio below the minimum acceptable level of 120 per cent.

Sanyo Securities said it was faced not only with Japan's prolonged economic slump, but also sliding values for its shares and real estate holdings.

Tokyo District Court has granted an order protecting assets worth ¥297.6bn (£1.48bn) at the end of September. Outstanding debts were worth ¥373.6bn (£1.85bn).

While other stockbrokers have gone out of business in Japan, none has filed for protection from creditors. Others have simply been closed to new business or sold.

Shares in Jacques Vert suspended

Long-suffering investors in Jacques Vert, the womenswear retailer, were dealt another blow yesterday when dealings in the company's shares were suspended at 21.5p pending publication of the annual report and accounts for the year to 3 May.

A spokesman for the company said losses for the last year would be close to £9m.

Prior to the suspension price, Jacques Vert had a stock market value of just £6.6m, having been worth more than £50m when the shares peaked at 173p last year.

COMPANY RESULTS

| | Turnover £ | Pre-tax £ | EPS | Dividend |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| AB Foods (p) | 5.2m (5.71m) | 880m (430m) | 75.5p (31p) | 10p (8.5p) |
| Black Leisure (p) | 32.5m (42.25m) | 5.31m (3.9m) | 10.89p (8.46p) | 1.75p (1.25p) |
| Blacks Clothing (p) | 649.125 (2.45m) | 176.905 (110.564) | 1.39p (0.92p) | |
| London Securities (p) | - (-) | 468,000 (381,000) | 6.8p (5.9p) | nil (nil) |
| Prowling (p) | 79.03m (50.24m) | 6.78m (2.22m) | 6.3p (1.5p) | 2.1p (1.9p) |
| Stratagem (p) | 158.7m (131.1m) | -4.6m (-3.03m) | -14.4p (-8.4p) | 4.0p (4.0p) |
| Style Holdings (p) | 10.92m (14.92m) | 591,000 (461,000) | 2.2p (2.2p) | |
| Worthing Mining (p) | 4.17m (2.2m) | -23.65m (-4.44m) | -50.7p (-10.8p) | |
| Worthing Energy (p) | 381.5m (246.5m) | 211,505 (111,232) | 1.4p (0.7p) | |

(p) - Final (f) - Interim

OUTLOOK
ON RISK
INTEREST
THE DEBT
MERGERS
FINANCIAL
HIGHLY
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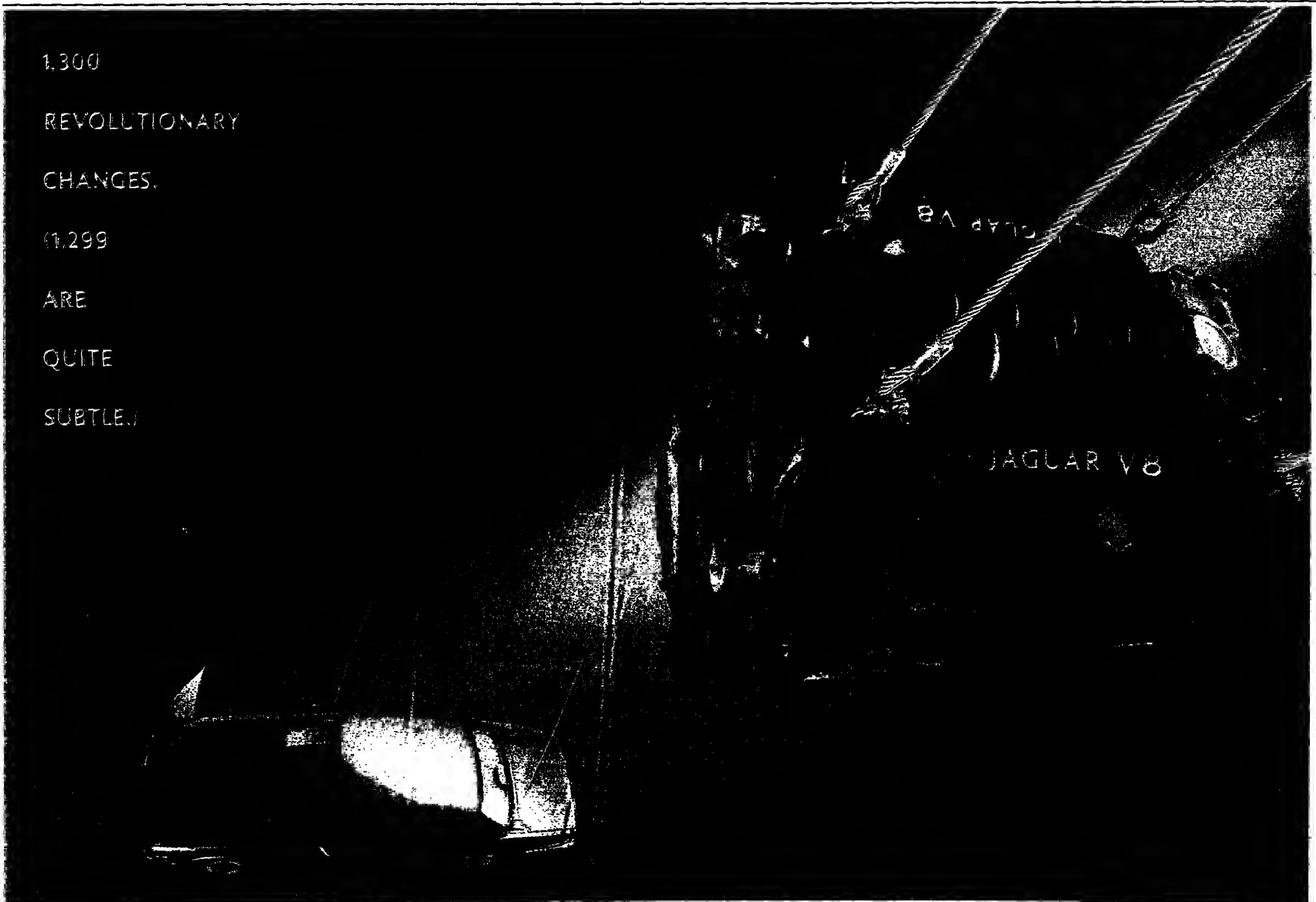
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OUTLOOK ON RAISING INTEREST RATES. THE DRINKS GIANTS' MERGER AND FINANCING THE HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINK

Shares volatility confounds rate expectations

What should the Monetary Policy Committee make of the downs and ups of the stock market? Most commentators have decided that it would not be politic to raise interest rates before the danger of another hair-raising nose-dive in share prices has receded. So the expectation that the cost of borrowing would rise by a quarter point on Thursday has shifted to an expectation that it will not.

The judgement is indeed finely balanced. While share prices have been falling, the figures continue to show that the economy is motoring along at a smart lick. The jobs market is as tight as it has been for a decade and consumer spending is buoyant. The housing market is at worst steady and in some areas still steamy. There is no reason yet to think the stock market turmoil has affected consumer behaviour. To cap it all, manufacturing appears to be dusting off the impact of the strong pound as export markets in Europe recover. Normally, the case for the next rise in interest rates would be overwhelming therefore. The caveat is whether an increase in borrowing costs at this time would destabilise equities again. If the Bank of England is to hold its fire this week, this is the justification it will have to give. Market turbulence might be enough to justify another month of wait and see.

As always, the decision hangs on whether the possibility that inflation will remain low without action outweighs the benefits of opting for earlier but smaller increases in interest rates. The really encouraging thing about the policy debate is that the advocates of higher rates are

actually so close to the wait and see brigade. Almost nobody expects rates to have to rise to 8 per cent or beyond. In Britain's economic history, this is progress indeed. But given the inheritance - too little action on interest rates before the election and a far smaller reduction in retail price inflation than could have been expected against such a favourable world inflation background - the Bank ought to strike straight away. The factors driving down the UK stock market are really nothing to do with the position of our own domestic economy or its inflation outlook. If it later turns out, as some commentators think, that the world is indeed sinking into a deflationary spiral, a quarter point on interest rates now would not matter either way in any case.

Guinness marriage won't boost sales

When Guinness and Grand Metropolitan first announced their marriage last May, the competition obstacles and other potential difficulties with the merger looked almost too great to be surmountable. If the competition authorities in either Brussels or the US didn't get them, then Bernard Arnault, Guinness's troublesome minority shareholder, certainly would, was the general view. As it is, the couple looks like jumping all of these potential roadblocks with surprisingly little damage to the fabric of the relationship. Brussels and Mr Arnault have already

been satisfied, leaving just the US Trade Commission standing in the way. So confident are directors of shifting this one too that in anticipation they've now arranged the date of the shareholders' vote (26 November) so that the whole thing can be approved by the High Court before the turn of the year. Both Guinness and GrandMet are hopeful that the price extracted by the US Trade Commission by way of divestment will not exceed 5 per cent of their combined profits, the level at which the rules would require them to go back to shareholders for fresh approvals.

While this would actually be quite a lot, it would not be a deal breaker. Actually the divestment required is likely to be a good deal lower. Since Diageo is already being asked to divest Dewar's in Europe, it would plainly be a neat solution to the problem if that were the brand chosen for cull by the US authorities too. Analysts reckon that if the brand were disposed of lock, stock and barrel, it could fetch some £500m, more than enough to cover the extra capital repayment Guinness and GrandMet announced yesterday.

So a happy ending after all. But will the couple live happily ever after? This is a merger driven primarily by its potential for cost-cutting. Nearly £200m annually will be cut from the cost base on the liquor side of the group, it is reckoned. More doubtful is the claim that the complementary brand portfolios and distribution networks of the two companies will succeed in greatly enhancing sales. Claims like this have been made before for drinks mergers, notably by Ernest Saunders

when in short order he acquired first Bells and then Distillers. Certainly Guinness later succeeded in putting up prices by quite a lot, but it did not succeed in selling significantly more Scotch.

The same is likely to prove true of this latest act of consolidation in the drinks industry. The benefit will all be to the shareholders in terms of lower costs and higher prices. But will it enhance consumer choice, competition and job prospects? Not a chance of it.

Railtrack saves the day for LCR

After the salutary experience of Euro-tunnel, raising finance for the high-speed rail link that will eventually connect London and the rest of the country to the Channel tunnel was always going to be a difficult proposition to sell. But London and Continental Railways, the consortium selected to build the 68-mile link, seems to have gone one better than even Euro-tunnel could manage under Sir Alastair Morton's tumultuous leadership.

LCR has run into its first full-blown financial crisis before a single sod has been turned or the City tapped for pound in either debt or equity. The project, we are told, is in meltdown mode. In a desperate bid to slash costs (estimated at £3bn before financing charges) LCR is contemplating building it in two phases. That means passengers will only be whisked a *grande vitesse* as far as the Es-

sex hinterland whereupon they will have to make do with a rather more stately progress into Waterloo via the rickety old Southern rail network. What about the St Pancras terminus and seamless onward travel north of the capital? We'll build it if we ever raise the money.

Step forward Railtrack with a triple-A credit rating and more cash flow than it knows what to do with to save the day. It will take a stake in the project, rustle up another £600m and guarantee that Britain has the 21st century rail network that a nation committed to being at the centre of Europe needs and deserves.

Given that LCR numbers SBC Warburg among its shareholders and the world's second-biggest bank among its providers of project finance, talk of a financial crisis looks a little overdone.

What is apparent, however, is that Railtrack wants to muscle its way in and seems to have the backing of the Government which just so happens to be putting up £1.4bn of the construction costs.

Railtrack has the kind of cashflow that LCR will struggle to raise from its Eurostar services, the project experience and the access to cheap capital. It also has a vested interest in ensuring that St Pancras goes ahead since that will free up freight capacity on existing rail lines to the tunnel.

The last thing LCR can afford is a re-run of the Channel tunnel so it is right to want the project costed down to the last penny before pressing the button. But when it does, don't be too surprised to see the Fat Controller, Railtrack's Sir Bob Horton, somewhere on the footplate.

Airbus boosts production as Boeing cuts Douglas line

Airbus Industrie is to raise aircraft production by 25 per cent next year following confirmation of a \$6bn (£3.6bn) order from USAirways while Boeing is set to write-off a further \$1bn by closing down McDonnell Douglas production lines.

Michael Harrison examines the prospects for the world's two leading manufacturers of commercial airliners.

The Toulouse-based Airbus consortium plans to increase production from 185 planes this year to 234 next year to cope with an orders backlog that now stands at more than 1,000 aircraft worth \$70bn.

The decision was taken after USAirways confirmed an order for 124 jets from the A320 range worth between \$4.3bn and \$6bn.

Together with further options and orders to be confirmed, the deal with USAirways could involve as many as 400 aircraft worth \$17bn, making it one of the biggest commercial jet contracts ever.

Shares in British Aerospace, which has a 20 per cent stake in the four-nation consortium, closed 35p higher at £16.17 on confirmation of the giant order. BAe makes wings for the Airbus range at its Chester plant in the North-west.

Meanwhile, Boeing an-

nounced in Seattle last night that it was to scrap production of the McDonnell Douglas MD-80 and MD-90 by mid-1999 once existing orders have been completed.

The wide-bodied MD-11 will continue in production but mainly as a freighter aircraft, not a passenger jet.

Boeing, which took over McDonnell Douglas for \$13bn earlier this year, has also put the future of its most recent jet, the 100-seat MD-95, under review.

Boeing has agreed to honour a launch order for 50 of the aircraft from Air Tran but said it would need to assess the market to decide whether it can keep the jet in production.

Analysts believe that the closure costs involved in running down the McDonnell Douglas production lines in Long Beach, California, could force it to write-off a further \$500m-\$1bn.

This is on top of the \$2.6bn charge Boeing is incurring to cover the costs of production difficulties at its Seattle plants caused by the unprecedented increase in manufacturing rates.

Boeing wrote off \$1.6bn in the third quarter and expects to take a further \$1bn charge next year to cover the costs of penalty payments for late deliveries and production hiccups.

Ron Woodard, president of Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, refused to be drawn on the scale of the write-offs at McDonnell Douglas, saying they would be released with the group's fourth-quarter results.



Cleaning up their act: The Environment Agency wants water companies to reduce the amount of pollution

The Environment Agency is to press the privatised water companies to spend billions of pounds on additional environmental improvements, reducing the prospect of big cuts in customer bills.

The call will put further pressure on Ian Byatt, the industry regulator, as he begins work in earnest on the next industry price formula, for the five years from 2000. Mr Byatt has said he wants to see a substantial one-off drop in customer bills, with increases of no more than inflation in the following years after 2000, to compensate for the hefty dividend increases made by the companies during the current price cap.

Water companies urged to improve the environment

In a consultation paper, to be published next month, the agency will suggest a shopping list of clean-up measures on top of the statutory improvements the water industry has to make to waste water treatment works. They include reducing discharges from sewage overflows, improving wetlands and boosting water quality.

The agency has stepped up its campaign, launching a new review of water resources which will focus on the amount of water extracted from rivers and streams during drought orders. Richard Streeter, who is leading the agency's response to Mr Byatt's price review, said consumers had missed out on greater environmental bene-

fits in the current price control from 1995 to 2000.

"This time the agency is absolutely adamant about this. We're talking about billions of pounds over a five-year period," said Mr Streeter. The agency has asked the water companies to produce lists of possible schemes, which will be costed by next May.

Soon-to-be-released consumer research by the agency is expected to show households support the argument and would not necessarily prefer price cuts.

The competing arguments will be put next year to John Prescott, minister for the environment and transport.

Chris Godsmark

IN BRIEF

Levi to cut 6,400 jobs through US factory closures

Levi Strauss is closing 11 plants in four US states and making redundant 6,395 workers in an attempt to reduce its excess production capacity. The company, which makes Dockers, Levis and Slates clothing, said the workers represented 34 per cent of its manufacturing workforce in the US and Canada. The company's production capacity had increased through improved manufacturing efficiencies at the same time that growth in the apparel market was expected to slow, a spokesman said. The plants to be closed are in Arkansas, New Mexico, Tennessee and Texas.

Become activists, says Roddick

Body Shop founder Anita Roddick today calls for businesses to move beyond being good corporate citizens and toward being corporate activists. Her speech will conclude a one-day conference on corporate citizenship being held in London to assess the ramifications for business of the statement by Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, that all sections of society have "rights with responsibilities".

Directors join Energis board

Energis, the telecommunications network in the process of being floated by National Grid, has appointed two more non-executive directors to its board. They are Nigel Walsley, an executive director of Carlton Television, and Christopher Rodrigues, chief executive of the Bradford & Bingley Building Society. Energis has been beefing up its board in advance of the flotation, planned for December. The Grid is expected to sell off a 25 to 30 per cent stake in the company, valuing Energis at about £1bn.

Hilton raises takeover stakes

Hilton Hotels Corp of the US intensified the battle for control of ITT Corp by sweetening its takeover offer to \$12.8bn (£7.6bn) in what analysts reckon is a gamble that investors will favour its predominantly cash proposal over Starwood Lodging Trust's rival and predominantly stock offer of \$13.3bn. Hilton said it would pay \$80 a share, with 55 per cent in cash and the rest in stock, including a security guaranteeing that Hilton's stock will rise to \$40 in a year. Starwood is offering \$67 a share in stock and \$15 in cash. Both offers include the assumption of \$3.5bn in debt. The surprise move by Hilton comes less than two weeks after Stephen Bollenbach, its chairman and chief executive, said he would not compete with Starwood. "It's a more attractive deal than Starwood's because of the certainty of the cash," said Steve Cohen, director of research at Kellner, DiLeo & Co. ITT said it would review Hilton's offer.

Losses soar at Waverley

Waverley Mining announced that full-year losses had soared from £4.44m to £23.65m, and said that it had reappraised its strategy and planned to reduce operating costs by gradually eliminating borrowings and continuing to cut overheads. Waverley Mining said the fall in the gold price, from \$381.50 to \$333.65 during the financial year and the Bre-X affair, which had a damaging effect on investor confidence, were two major causes for the losses. It added that, despite the very poor operational results, the investment portfolio had substantial value and the board would continue to look for means to ensure that this was reflected in shareholder value.

MEPC sells buildings for £300m

MEPC, the UK's third-largest property company, has sold 191 small properties to GE Capital Services for £300m as part of its continuing organisation of its portfolio. The sale price of the properties in London and Manchester reflect an annual rental yield of 7.5 per cent. The properties, with a combined 2.8 million square feet in space, include 43 buildings in London's West End and Knightsbridge. The company said in September that it would sell its US and Australian assets and buy the property company PSIT for £247m to focus its investments on high-quality properties in the UK. The latest sale reduces the company's gearing from 84 to 69 per cent.

Baron de Rothschild dies

Baron Edmond de Rothschild, the prominent French banker known for his Bordeaux wineries, died yesterday following a long illness, aged 71. Baron de Rothschild, once described by *Le Monde* as "10 times, maybe even 100 times" wealthier than any other member of the Rothschild clan, will be succeeded as president of his Geneva-based Baron Edmond de Rothschild Banque by his son, Benjamin.

Obituaries, page 22

United News looks at pay-TV channel

United News & Media is considering linking up with Southampton Leisure to develop a pay-TV channel for Southampton Football Club, reports Cathy Newman.

United News, which has already been linked with plans for a Leeds United channel, is assessing ways of developing its pay-TV interests. One option is to exploit the geographical synergies between its Meridian ITV franchise and Southampton by setting up a channel dedicated to showing games from

the club's archives. Both Meridian and Southampton are based in the South.

Although United News is not thought to have made any firm commitments to the idea, Malcolm Wall, deputy director of United Broadcasting and Entertainment, said yesterday: "We're always assessing any opportunities to break into the pay-TV market."

Southampton is understood to be looking for an investor to take a substantial stake in the business. City analysts said they would not be surprised if United News ended up buying a share of the company as part of the pay-TV deal. However, United denied this was being considered yesterday.

Southampton has had a troubled year since Secure Retirement reversed into the club in January. Its shares have more than halved in value from 150p to 72.5p.

Manchester United became the first football club to enter the pay-TV market last month when it tied up with BSkyB and Granada Group to set up its own channel, MUTV. The three parties will have an equal share of equity and will contribute up to £10m between them.

Leeds and Newcastle United have also declared their intentions to set up their own pay-TV channels. Although clubs are eventually expected to make substantial returns from launching their own channels,

some analysts have expressed doubt about the short-term viability of the ventures.

BSkyB has an exclusive contract to show live Premier League games, which has another four years to run. As a result, MUTV will only show games from Manchester United's archives.

Lord Hollick's United News has been probing ways of getting involved in pay-TV since it lost the race to win three digital terrestrial television licences earlier this year. United News had backed NTL, the cable company, which lost out to British Digital Broadcasting, the group owned by Granada Group and Carlton Commu-

Bass to close two breweries in Carlsberg-Tetley deal

Bass has agreed to buy Carlsberg-Tetley's brewing operation in Burton-upon-Trent for around £20m and close two of its own breweries with the loss of nearly 200 jobs. The Bass brewery in Sheffield will close in January 1999 with the loss of 57 jobs if no buyer can be found. The Cardiff brewery will close the following year, affecting a further 126 jobs. Bass blamed the closures on falling demand for real ale.

The Campaign for Real Ale pressure group attacked the decision, saying Bass was "mercilessly stamping out hundreds of years of brewing tradition in the two cities". It said the closures could mark the end for re-

gional beers such as Worthington Dark Mild and Hancock's HB.

The deal with Carlsberg-Tetley will mean that 537 jobs will transfer to Bass which plans to integrate the operations with its own Burton brewing capacity. Bass said the total cost of the closures would be £25m, including a £10m asset write-off.

Carlsberg-Tetley plans to close two other breweries in Wrexham and Alloa if a buyer cannot be found.

The dual announcements are part of the fall-out from the Government's recent decision to block Bass' planned takeover of Carlsberg-Tetley.

Nigel Cope

27/BUSINESS

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY
4 NOVEMBER 1997

Market instability has affected the three time zones in different ways



**HAMISH
MCRAE**
ON THE
AGENDA FOR THE
NEXT FEW MONTHS

Markets can only manage to keep excited for a few days, so it should be no surprise if they now flop for a while. What last week has done, among other things, is to bring into focus the fact that the three different time zones have very different concerns. Everyone was worried - that much was common - but people in different time zones were worried for completely different reasons.

In the East Asian time zone, last week was the week of reassessment: the week when people realised that the whole region faced an inevitably long struggle to rebuild confidence. At best there may be just a pause in economic growth lasting a few months; at worst there is going to be an 18-month recession. No one knows which way the coin will flip, but they are now aware that it is spinning. My hunch is that there is quite a lot of bad news still to come, largely because it will take more than a year for the excesses of bank lending and investment in non-productive assets to unwind. But more important, it would be wrong to see the time zone as a single economic entity. Some parts will shrug off the market upheavals; others will be severely damaged by them for several years.

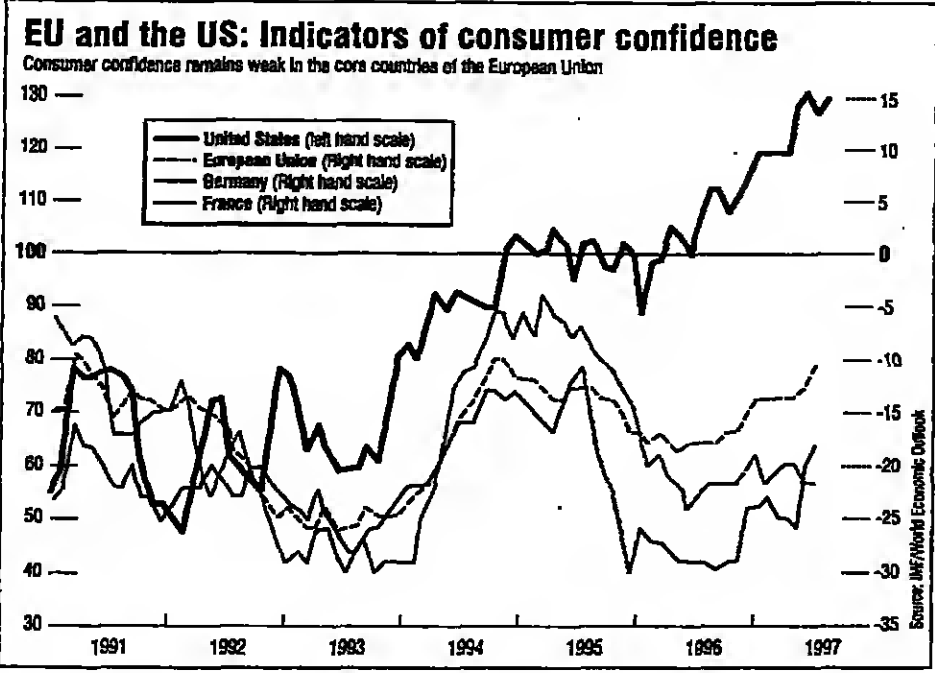
In the European time zone two rather different things have happened. There have been, quite independently of the market turmoil, some signs of perkiness in both the German and the French economies. There is nothing substantial happening - nothing that is going to make a serious dent in unemployment - but consumers in both countries seem a little less gloomy and export demand has continued to be quite solid.

Alongside this modest cyclical uplift has been an "EMU effect": the act of preparing for EMU seems to be starting to stimulate economic activity in a number of ways. Practical preparation for it costs businesses money; large companies are already having to invest in new systems for the exercise has now gone beyond the planning stage. To some extent this has come out of existing IT budgets, but in many cases companies are having to spend money they otherwise would not have spent.

The result in the short term has been a rise in corporate investment. Meanwhile, companies may have been considering the downside of EMU, the longer-term structural implications for their business, but with a few exceptions (like ASEA-Brown Boveri last week) the employment implications of this have not shown through.

So last week the general market uncertainty stuck, in Europe, an economy which seemed at last to be recovering a little bounce. Will market uncertainty flatten this modest recovery? I don't know the right answer but I know that is the right question.

In North America, in a completely different cyclical position, the issue is whether a market-driven knock to confidence will be the thing which ends the boom. Something was always going to end the boom. The prime candidate would be rising inflation and the associated higher interest rates, but if markets turn down then maybe



they will do the job by cutting into consumer confidence.

You can catch a feel for the different economic environment of Europe and North America by glancing at the graph. This comes from the new IMF World Economic Outlook out last month, and is already a hit out of date.

But you can see the contrast between the astonishing self-confidence of US consumers and the gloom of European ones, particularly in the "core" countries of France and Germany. (The UK is not shown but would be swinging up towards the US levels.) It may well be that US consumers are so buoyant that they will completely override the market setback.

The likelihood of that is all the greater if sentiment continues to recover as it seemed to be doing yesterday. On the other hand, a sustained recovery would merely postpone the adjustment, and narrow down the margin of error for policy mistakes.

And us? It is difficult because Britain is a European economy

which behaves like a North American one.

This is not just a cyclical point, though it is a bit of a relief that the fact that the UK cycle is out of line with the rest of Europe is at last accepted.

It is also a structural point. There are a number of ways in which the US and UK financial structures are different from the core continental ones.

The importance of home ownership is crucial in the US and UK there is an easy availability of credit both for home purchase and for buying consumer items, a high level of assets in relation to income (a function of home ownership) but also a high level of debt (ditto).

Beyond this there is, of course, the flexible labour markets and the high rate of business start-ups. The result is that it is easier to stimulate domestic demand in the US and UK by a cheap interest rate policy; but both economies are also more vulnerable to a sustained rise in rates.

We may also be more vulnerable to a stock market reversal, though we don't know.

So the events of last week have set an agenda for the next few months. But it is a different agenda for different parts of the world.

We always talk of a single world economy, but actually there isn't one: not only do the three different time zones have completely different preoccupations, but even within those time zones there is differing economic performance.

Understanding this is going to be enormously important in the next few months. It is going to be a worrying time; the markets are going to be ill-tempered; investors are going to be on edge. The optimists are going to grab bits of good news and use this to reinforce their beliefs that all is well, while the pessimists are going to interpret each bit of news to reinforce their view that the long bull market is at an end.

I think things are going to be much more complicated than that. Some parts of the world will pull through in good shape, while others will blunder.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

**LEA
PATERSON**



It seems that Sam Chisholm, the so-called "bruiser of the box", is looking forward to taking a back seat at BSkyB. So much so that, according to some of BSkyB's institutional investors, he is expected to step down a month and a half earlier than planned. Mr Chisholm, whose confrontational management style has made him a legend within the industry, is preparing to bow out at the annual general meeting in a week's time. He had been braced to hang on until the next year.

The way will now be left clear for Mark Booth, the chief executive-in-waiting, to seize the reins and make his mark on the company. He had formerly been chief operating officer of Rupert Murdoch's JStyB for just six months before he was thrust into the hot-seat at BSkyB. Although a relative unknown in the UK, Mr Booth is already beginning to make his views on BSkyB's future known.

Sources tell me he is keen to boost the company's programming expertise and may even consider investing in independent production companies.

However, Mr Chisholm, who announced in June that he was to step down due to poor health, is going to be keeping a close eye on the company's progress. He, like his deputy, David Chance, who is also quitting at the end of the year, will remain as "consultants". And, judging by Mr Chisholm's propensity to make his views widely known, Mr Booth is unlikely to be short of advice.

testy of L'Oréal UK, which yesterday announced his appointment as vice chairman, Mr Vyner also hopes to spend some time on his boat, *Miss Poppy*.

The origin of the boat's name, it seems, is not some dear old aunt, as one might imagine, but rather an ancient TV series. "You see, it's because it's registered with Lloyds," confided Mr Vyner yesterday, "and you have to have a unique name. My wife and I went through 50 or 60 names, with no success." But Mrs Vyner finally saved the day with *Miss Poppy*, the name of a "lovely lady" she had been watching on TV.

The plans don't stop there for the energetic Mr Vyner. The animal-loving ex-Sainsbury's chief is on the fund-raising committee for the Blue Cross's centenary appeal. The charity, known as the Red Cross of the animal kingdom, wants to raise £500m for its animal hospital, based in Victoria. "It's a lovely charity," said Mr Vyner, who is also on the Blue Cross's governing committee. Perhaps the man once dubbed the "rotweiler of Stamford Street" for his aggressive buying techniques really is a puppy dog, after all.

The ambition of Perween Warsi, the 1996 Woman Entrepreneur of the World, used to be to have her Indian cuisine "in every household in the UK". But Mrs Warsi, whose business, S&A Foods, is a major supplier of ready-made Indian meals to Sainsbury and Asda, must have more or less reached that goal by now.

Not being one to rest on her laurels, Mrs Warsi, who began by selling home-made samosas to a local deli in Derby, now wants to see her food "in every household in the world", according to a spokesperson. Given the news last week that her firm has secured a lucrative contract with British Airways, it shouldn't be too long before Mrs Warsi outgrows that ambition too.

Since the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales, many in the media have faced sharp criticism for the use of "cheque-book journalism", or the phenomenon of paying an interviewee for their time and information. Politically, of course, it is the left which has been most vociferous in pursuing this cause. So how strange it seems to find that one major political figure who insists on this old-fashioned practice is none other than the Red Baroness, Barbara Castle.

In a bravura performance at last year's Labour Party conference, it was the Baroness who boldly attacked Gordon Brown and Tony Blair for failing to mention pensioners in their electoral programme.

She led a siren call for pensions to be updated in line with earnings, not inflation. Surely the nation should know more about her views? Well, if you want to interview the Baroness, resident in her Parliamentary pension and her life peer's allowances, be warned that she demands a fee.

Foreign Exchange Rates

| Country | Spot | 1 month | 3 month |
|-------------|-------|---------|---------|
| UK | 10000 | | |
| Australia | 23221 | 23467 | 23458 |
| Austria | 20494 | 20444 | 20396 |
| Canada | 61040 | 59140 | 58496 |
| Denmark | 23573 | 23508 | 23379 |
| Finland | 1004 | 1004 | 1004 |
| France | 14701 | 14701 | 14701 |
| Germany | 87391 | 87391 | 87391 |
| Greece | 45836 | 45491 | 45474 |
| Hong Kong | 12130 | 12130 | 12130 |
| Italy | 28484 | 28475 | 28439 |
| Japan | 24730 | 24730 | 24730 |
| Malaysia | 34036 | 34036 | 34036 |
| Mexico | 31781 | 31698 | 31698 |
| Netherlands | 32790 | 32790 | 32790 |
| New Zealand | 26203 | 26203 | 26203 |
| Norway | 11830 | 11830 | 11830 |
| Portugal | 25638 | 25638 | 25638 |
| Spain | 16342 | 16342 | 16342 |
| Sweden | 22056 | 22056 | 22056 |
| Switzerland | 20822 | 20822 | 20822 |
| USA | 23591 | 23591 | 23591 |

Other Spot Rates

| Country | Spot | 1 month | 3 month |
|-----------|-------|---------|---------|
| Argentina | 16756 | 10000 | |
| Brazil | 19494 | 10000 | |
| China | 83978 | 83978 | |
| Czech Rep | 54508 | 54508 | |
| Egypt | 58878 | 58878 | |
| Hungary | 36948 | 36948 | |
| India | 32745 | 32745 | |
| Indonesia | 52023 | 52023 | |
| Kuwait | 05077 | 05077 | |
| Nigeria | 57726 | 57726 | |

Interest Rates

| Country | 3 month | 6 month | 1 year |
|-------------|---------|---------|--------|
| UK | 7.00% | | |
| Germany | 5.50% | | |
| France | 5.50% | | |
| Italy | 5.50% | | |
| Spain | 5.50% | | |
| Sweden | 5.50% | | |
| Switzerland | 5.50% | | |
| USA | 5.50% | | |

Money Market Rates

| | Overnight | 1 week | 1 month | 3 months | 6 months | 1 year |
|-------------------|-----------|--------|---------|----------|----------|--------|
| | Bid | Offer | Bid | Offer | Bid | Offer |
| US Treasury Bills | | | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 |
| US Gov | | | | | | |
| Government Depos | 726 | 728 | 726 | 728 | 724 | 744 |
| Government Bonds | 726 | 731 | 719 | 720 | 724 | 730 |
| Government Notes | 726 | 731 | 719 | 720 | 724 | 730 |
| Commercial Paper | | | | | | |
| Banking CDs | | | 221 | 230 | 228 | 232 |
| Nonbanking CDs | | | 221 | 230 | 228 | 232 |
| EU Deposits | | | 561 | 573 | 573 | 578 |
| UK Deposits | | | 647 | 625 | 450 | 425 |

Source: Bloomberg

Liffe Futures

| Contract | Settlement | High | Low | Est floor volume | Open interest |
|------------------|------------|--------|--------|------------------|---------------|
| Long Oil | 18.61 | 18.50 | 18.70 | 5703 | 10575 |
| German Bund | 124.45 | 124.45 | 124.45 | 10402 | 20843 |
| US Long Bond | 107.84 | 107.84 | 107.84 | 10784 | 10784 |
| Italian Bond | 110.70 | 110.70 | 110.70 | 10703 | 10703 |
| Japan Govt Bd | 100.72 | 100.72 | 100.72 | 10072 | 10072 |
| 3 Mth Eurodollar | 92.63 | 92.63 | 92.63 | 9263 | 9263 |
| 3 Mth Eurodollar | 92.63 | 92.63 | 92.63 | 9263 | 9263 |
| 3 Mth Eurodollar | 92.63 | 92.63 | 92.63 | 9263 | 9263 |

| Commodity | Settlement | High | Low | 31 Dec | 31 Dec |
|-------------|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Oil | 18.61 | 18.50 | 18.70 | 18.61 | 18.61 |
| Gold | 375.00 | 375.00 | 375.00 | 375.00 | 375.00 |
| Silver | 10.00 | 10.00 | 10.00 | 10.00 | 10.00 |
| Copper | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Aluminum | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Zinc | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Nickel | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Lead | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Iron Ore | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Wheat | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Corn | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Soybeans | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
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| Cheese | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Yogurt | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Ice Cream | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Soft Drinks | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Alcohol | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Tobacco | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Textiles | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
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| Copper | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
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| Iron Ore | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Wheat | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Corn | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Soybeans | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
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| Chicken | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Eggs | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Milk | 1.00 | 1 | | | |

Rising stars complement Monty on revitalised tour

The courses may not always have been up to scratch but the players were. The European tour came to a soggy end at the weekend with Colin Montgomerie again the No 1 but, says Andy Farrell, hopes for the future have not been dampened.

Ken Schofield has known better wet, rainy Sundays in Spain than the one two days ago. Valderrama and the Ryder Cup this was not.

Schofield's early morning flight was diverted to Tangiers because of storms in Andalusia. He arrived at Montecastillo to find a flooded golf course and just in time to cut the season-ending championship, the Volvo Masters, to 54 holes, amid an atmosphere of extreme reluctance among

the players for any other alternative.

Then there was ample time for a study of what exactly it is that makes the departure lounge at Gibraltar airport the most depressing in the world before finally heading back to Wentworth in the early hours of Monday.

It would have been a fitting end to this year's European tour but for the fact that Lee Westwood had just clinched the biggest title of his career and the news from Colin Montgomerie yesterday. In ruling out a move full-time to the US tour, the European No 1 for five years running said it was "inconceivable that I should choose to leave at this crucial stage" in the tour's development.

Montgomerie will play more in America next year. In an attempt to find the right formula for winning a major championship, but his base will still be on the European tour. Schofield, naturally, was

delighted. "Colin's record speaks for itself," he said.

"The playing standards he has consistently set are the very highest in international golf. In welcoming and strongly supporting Colin's intended 1998 European and international playing schedule, the challenge to all tour members will again be to reach and match his standard."

Though he only won twice and did not beat his own money record, Montgomerie had to work hard for his fifth title. He may have won three times in 1996, but he only had eight top-10 finishes compared with 11 this year. His total of 177 under par and stroke average of 69.37 were both personal bests.

"Standards are improving all the time in Europe," Montgomerie said. "There is a big challenge to win here. We have some very, very good young players. I'm sure the European tour will go from strength to strength. Three years ago when

Nick Faldo left we were looking for good young players and there weren't any. Now there is Westwood, Clarke, Bjorn, Garrijo and Harrington."

Westwood's victory took him from sixth last year to third in the money list, behind Montgomerie and Bernhard Langer. He was one of only 16 players to make the cut in all four major championships, a list that included only two other Europeans, Montgomerie and Jesper Parnevik. Still only 24, he made an impressive Ryder Cup debut at Valderrama.

"Lee may be the top of the tree," Montgomerie said. "I've always rated him. He is a great asset for the European tour. He is a confident lad and has got a very bright future." Westwood learnt a lot from playing with Nick Faldo in the Ryder Cup, but also from being in opposition to Montgomerie.

"I've played with him that often this year, that I realised I needed to improve my putting," Westwood said. "I worked really hard on my putting in the second half of the year, as well as the rest of my short game. Although he hits so many fairways and greens, Monty's short game does not get enough credit."

Padraig Harrington was probably the most frustrated player at Montecastillo. The Irishman was lying second to Westwood and a win would have given a chance at an invitation to the US Masters. But he added an eighth-place finish on the money list to his 11th spot last year, while the Thomas Bjorn, was 15th despite missing large portions of the season with injuries.

A mass exodus to the US tour, once a possibility, now looks unlikely. Westwood and Darren Clarke, the Open ro-



Lee Westwood, 'a great asset for the European Tour,' celebrates during the Ryder Cup, watched by Nick Faldo's caddy Fanny Sunesson. Photograph: Emptis

up who like Montgomerie has decided not to take up his US tour card, will play more in America on invitations, as Per-Ulrik Johansson would like to do instead of going to the US Qualifying School to get a card and desert Europe totally.

Apart from the youngsters, the best news of the season was the re-emergence of the broom-handled Langer and the return of Jose Maria Olazabal. He played his best golf of

the year early on when he was just glad to have got over his foot injuries, but after two weeks rest he was challenging in third place at Montecastillo.

The downside was the cracks that appeared in the tour, or rather, the greens. Crans-sur-Sierre was appallingly sub-standard and came a year after the fiasco at Collingtree Park. But what also concerned the players was that two important events - the BMW Interna-

tional at Eichenreid which decided the Ryder Cup team, and the Volvo Masters at Montecastillo - were played on courses not challenging enough for tournaments of that status.

"There are lessons to be learned," Montgomerie said. With the game about to go global from 1999 with the introduction of the World Golf Championships, Schofield knows the European tour must absorb those lessons.

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Hall's late kick lifts Jets to top spot

John Hall's fourth field goal, a 37-yarder just under five minutes into overtime, gave the New York Jets a 19-16 win over the Baltimore Ravens on Sunday and sole possession of first place in the AFC East for the first time in nearly 11 years. "We won another close game and we are learning how to win," Bill Parcells, the Jets coach, said.

The Jets had allowed Baltimore to level the scores on a 16-yard touchdown pass from Vinny Testaverde to Derrick Alexander with three seconds left in regulation. But Glenn Foley then led the Jets on a 12-play, 60-yard drive after they won the toss to begin the extra period.

Keyshawn Johnson made a juggling 21-yard catch to put the hall at the Ravens' 34 and Wayne Chrebet added a nine-yard reception on third-and-seven that put the ball on the 22. Hall, a rookie from Wisconsin who had missed a short kick that cost the Jets in an overtime loss to New England in September, calmly booted his game-winning through the uprights.

Meanwhile in Buffalo, Steve Christie kicked three field goals including a 39-yarder with 10:42 remaining that lifted the Bills to a 9-6 victory over the Miami Dolphins, who lost their quarterback, Dan Marino, to an ankle injury.

Marino sprained his left ankle with 31 seconds left in the first half. He returned for the start of the third quarter but left again after being intercepted by the defensive end, Sean Moran, on the first series. "I didn't feel I could move the way I wanted to in order to be effective," Marino said.

Results, tables, Sporting Digest, page 31

THE 1997 EUROPEAN TOUR IN DETAIL

| ORDER OF MERIT | STATISTICS | Highest start by winner |
|---|------------|-------------------------|
| Leading final placers: 1 C Montgomerie (Soc) 270847, 2 B Langer (Ger) 229238, 3 J Westwood (Eng) 228278, 4 D Clarke (Ire) 227408, 5 J Hoggan (Wls) 225052, 6 J Garriga (Spa) 224175, 7 R Gossens (Bel) 224167, 8 P Harrington (Ire) 223982, 9 J M O'Connell (Spa) 223548, 10 R Karlsson (Swe) 223442, 11 P J Johnson (Swe) 223316, 12 C Beck (Ger) 223277, 13 E Romero (Arg) 223048, 14 M Jones (Eng) 222756, 15 T P Ballew (Eng) 222550, 16 J Russell (Soc) 222553, 17 P Sorenstam (Swe) 222524, 18 G Turner (NZ) 222500, 19 J Hoggan (Swe) 222479, 20 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 21 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 22 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 23 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 24 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 25 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 26 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 27 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 28 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 29 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 30 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 31 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 32 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 33 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 34 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 35 P J Johnson (Soc) 222479, 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With every month, Sky's grip on the game becomes ever tighter



ALAN WATKINS
ON RUGBY

Several people have suggested that Great Britain's performance against Australia in the rugby league international was the consequence of the decline of the game in this country. They go on to say that this decline has been brought about, partly at any rate, by Rupert Murdoch's virtual takeover of the sport.

Another explanation has been put forward: that rugby union, at any rate at its top levels, is now more professional than rugby league ever was, and that consequently league is the poor relation.

Attaching names such as "Bulls", "Warriors" and so forth to famous clubs is clearly pretty silly, as is having matches in the summer. Irrespective of whether the decline has or has

not been brought about by Mr Murdoch, he or his earthly representatives have clearly had an effect on the game.

What will the effect be on rugby union? For with every month that passes, the grip over the game exercised by Sky Television becomes ever tighter. A few months ago I wrote that I would hold out for as long as I could but that I might have to succumb in the end. Well, that moment has now arrived.

It was becoming clearer during the Lions tour of South Africa, most of which I managed to see either on local licensed premises or in the pavilion at Lord's cricket ground. When the new season began I found I was following the same paths, though I did not go to Lord's.

Sky was showing matches which I wanted to see, Leicester against Bath for example, and which I could now see without making the journey to Welford Road. There was the Heineken Cup as well. Above all, there was the deal the Rugby Football Union had struck with Sky.

A hasty reading of the newspaper accounts of a few months ago gave a misleading impression. So did the headlines "England's bluff called" and the like.

The RFU had tried to enter into a contract whereby all England's Five Nations internationals, at any rate those involving Ireland, Scotland and Wales (for France has its own separate arrangements), would be broadcast exclusively on

Sky. The Celtic nations then dug in and replied that, unless their matches were broadcast on terrestrial television, they would withdraw from the competition. "Five Nations saved", or so the headlines claimed.

Those who read the account rapidly might have been forgiven for thinking that the competition would be not only retained in its own form but broadcast in the traditional manner as part of the BBC's Saturday afternoon *Grandstand* coverage, with uncle Bill McLaren and all.

But this is to disregard what I call the "Twickenham option" which the RFU has retained. This means that all England's home internationals will be broadcast exclusively on

Sky, with "extended highlights", whatever that may mean, on independent television later on the Saturday. Scotland v England at Murrayfield will be shown on the BBC, but France v England on Sky, though that match is in Paris.

The attendance at international matches will clearly remain unaffected. Whether the attendance at First Division matches is less than it would otherwise be because of Sky, I do not know. I shall certainly stay at home more now on Saturday afternoons. What is evident, however, is that attendances generally are not sufficiently high to justify a fully professional game.

Professionalism is now being maintained partly by a collection of very rich men – the

Halls, the Wyrms, the Levettts, and so forth – and partly by one very rich man indeed in Mr Murdoch. The possibility of a loss of interest by the former group has been canvassed often enough. But what if Mr Murdoch loses his enthusiasm for the handling code? He was not previously known as a devotee. What then? What indeed.

At the moment, certainly, there is no sign of such a withdrawal, though Sky moves in mysterious ways. Last Sunday, for instance, a showing of Wasps v Newcastle was advertised in some papers, Wasps v Sale (the match was actually being played), in others. What the channel in fact showed was a game of ice

hockey. A spokeswoman for the professional clubs' organisation, Epruc, which negotiates with Sky, told me that the match originally scheduled had been the rearranged Wasps v Leicester. Even so, why could the Sale match not have been broadcast instead?

One of the two installers employed by Mr Murdoch was explaining about the card, the channels and the various buttons. "I suppose you want it for the rugby," he said. I assented. He had no means of knowing that I was interested in the game – still less that I earned part of my living by writing about it. Evidently there are no flies on Mr Murdoch, or on his employees.

RUGBY UNION

Best of the All Blacks may be yet to come

The really worrying aspect of Jonah Lomu's return to international rugby union is that he is the least of England's problems. Chris Hewett marks the arrival of a 36-strong All Black party already being touted as the strongest ever to leave New Zealand.

Like all the best story-tellers, John Hart had both good and bad news for England's youthfully ambitious top brass as he touched base just outside London yesterday. "I'm certainly not expecting great things from Jonah Lomu on this trip; after the medical trouble he's been through, it's remarkable that he's on the football field at all," the All Black coach confessed. But then came the punchline. "I do think, however, that this squad is capable of anything. It may be one of the best New Zealand sides of all time."

Typical. As one All Black bogyman prepares for a quiet five weeks, the other 35 look ready to go through the opposition like a dose of Epsom Salts. If Hart is right and the Christian Cullens, Jeff Wilsons, Frank Bunces and Carlos Spencers of this world catch fire, Clive Woodward and the rest of the red rose hierarchy may well find themselves regarding Mr Lomu with an air of wistful nostalgia.

There was no mistaking the sheen of confidence shimmering around the party as they pitched camp near Windsor yesterday and began preparations for this Saturday's tour opener with Llanelli at Stradey Park – the only club fixture included in an intense nine-match programme featuring two full Tests with England and others against Ireland and Wales.

Hart took the opportunity to get in a couple of early excuses – "We wanted two Tests, not four, and I think it's ludicrous

that such huge demands should be placed on players who have not had a break since February" – but he spoke with the assurance of a man who has no need of a safety net.

"Yes, I think we have an exceptional team here. I've always considered it a waste of time to make comparisons across generations, across different eras, because the rules have changed and the standard of opposition has increased. But the potential of this squad is vast and I see no end to the things it can achieve."

"We make mistakes and we're very self-critical – quite honestly, I don't think we've managed to sustain our best rugby for a full 80 minutes – but we're coming here off the back of eight big Test wins and I expect us to maintain our levels of performance."

Intriguingly, Hart went out of his way to dispel any notion of frailty in what appears to be an ageing All Black pack. Sean Fitzpatrick, Olo Brown, Ian Jones and the Brooke brothers, Robin and Zinzan, are all on the wrong side of 30 and the coach admitted he had come under some pressure to reach for the bus passes and pension books, but he insisted that, Zinzan apart, all the old-stagers had identified the 1999 World Cup as a realistic objective.

"I just don't share the view that they're past it," Hart said. "Zinzan is going at the end of this tour – we've known that for



Sean Fitzpatrick, the captain, looks ahead to the All Blacks' nine-match tour at yesterday's press conference in Windsor

Photograph: Peter Jay

some time – and Sean is beginning to pick up the sort of injuries he's never had to contend with before. But I'd say a clear majority of the pack will be there in '99. This is an experienced All Black side, not an old one.

"I'm all for injecting new talent into the Test side but it's an evolutionary thing. I don't believe in driving a successful team to the very end and then start rebuilding on a wholesale basis. As far as I'm concerned, rebuilding doesn't come into it if the selectors have been doing their job correctly."

"When I took over in '95 I had hundreds of letters telling me I should drop Fitz, Zinzan, Frank Bunce and Michael Jones. I think you'll agree

they've all gone pretty well for us over the last two years."

Lomu, a veritable spring chicken at 22, was suitably low key about his prospects of making any of the four Test line-ups. Knocked sideways both by a rare kidney complaint and a particularly "horrible" – Hart's word – course of medication, the outsized wing has played only two full games and two 40-minute halves since returning to active service last month. "I'm not back to full speed yet but I'm working on it," he said yesterday. "I'll be happy to find my feet again in the midweek side."

Tana Umaga, one of Lomu's direct rivals for the No 11 shirt, has also had his fair share of fitness trouble, albeit of a far less distressing nature. "Tana came

closest to missing the trip because of a serious foot injury, but thanks to the efforts of the medical team and the responsible way he has approached his own recovery, he's here," Hart said.

"There is not a single player in this party who is unavailable for the game with Llanelli."

Hart intends to field a shadow Test side at Stradey – "We asked for the fixture because we don't want our top guys playing the Irish in Dublin first up" – but will not confirm his line-up until tomorrow. However, much of the fascination of this tour lies in the performances of the so-called dirt-truckers: Todd Miller, the "new Cullen" from Waikato; Aaron Hopa and Todd Blackadder, the blind-side understudies to Taine Randall;

Steve Surrage, the Cambridge Blue No 8 from Canterbury; and Anton Oliver, an explosive hooker from Otago.

"Some of the big names know they are under pressure because we have a batch of youngsters putting their hands up for consideration," Hart said. "I think the gap between the two hemispheres is closing but when I look at England, I'm concerned at the shortage of English players in the top-line club sides. That's no way to develop a national team."

And by way of hammering home the point, Hart revealed at least six prime contenders for the 1999 World Cup squad had been left in New Zealand to quietly concentrate on their own development. Scary. Very scary.

New Zealand tour party

Full-backs: Christian Cullen (Central Otago), Todd Miller (Wellington). Wings: Jonah Lomu (Canterbury), Glen Osborne (North Harbour), Tana Umaga (Wellington), Jeff Wilson (Otago). Centres: Frank Bunce (North Harbour), Alama Ieremia (Wellington), Walter Little (North Harbour), Scott McLeod (Wellington), Jeremy Stanley (Auckland). Outside half: Andrew Hastings (Canterbury), Carlos Spencer (Auckland). Scrum-half: Justin Marshall (Canterbury), Jon Preston (Wellington), Mark Robinson (North Harbour). Props: Mark Allen (Canterbury), Con Barnes (Canterbury), Olo Brown (Auckland), Craig Donald (Auckland), Gordon Slater (Taranaki). Hookers: Sean Fitzpatrick (Auckland), Capt. Norm Hewitt (Southland), Anton Oliver (Otago). Locks: Robin Brooke (Auckland), Charles Hetherington (Auckland), Ian Jones (North Harbour), Mark Croxall (Wellington). Flankers: Todd Blackadder (Canterbury), Andrew Brown (Auckland), Mark Carter (Auckland), Aaron Hopa (Waikato), Josh Koroheke (Otago), Taine Randall (Otago). No 8s: Zinzan Brooke (Auckland), Steve Surrage (Canterbury). Manager: Mike Banks. Coach: John Hart.

Tour itinerary

Saturday 8 November: Llanelli, Stradey Park, 19.00.
Tuesday 11 November: Wales A, Cardiff Athletic, 17.00.
Saturday 15 November: Ireland, Lansdowne Road, 19.00 (to be confirmed).
Tuesday 18 November: Emerging England, Millennium Stadium, Huddersfield, 19.00.
Saturday 22 November: England, Old Trafford, 19.00.
Tuesday 25 November: England Rugby Partnership XV, Ashton Olds, Bristol, 19.00.
Saturday 29 November: Wales, Wembley Stadium, 19.00 (to be confirmed).
Tuesday 2 December: Emerging A, 19.00, Leicester Rugby Football Club.
Saturday 6 December: England, Twickenham, 19.00.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Huddersfield take over from Paris

Paris will be replaced by Huddersfield next season as what was the European Super League becomes, for the time being, a purely English operation.

The League's board of directors has decided that Huddersfield, who finished second in the First Division last season, will be promoted for 1998.

Paris and an application from Swansea are earmarked for possible inclusion in 1999, when Super League wants to expand to 14 clubs.

The loss of Paris – even if temporary – is a blow for the credibility and European credentials of the competition, however. "We need a little more time to prepare and realise that Super League is a very competitive division," Jean-Paul Ferre, the Paris president, said diplomatically. "I am confident that we will be serious contenders in 1999."

The chairman of the Swansea consortium, Neil McClure, said: "We were excited about the prospect of competing in Super League in 1998, but we have accepted the advice of the RFL."

Great Britain's Test flops are to be given the chance to redeem themselves at Old Trafford this Saturday. The side's head coach, Andy Goodway, will today name an unchanged squad for the second match of the British Gas series.

The hope this time, however, is that the Bradford Bulls full-back, Stuart Spruce, will be fit after an ankle injury that kept him out of the 38-14 defeat by Australia at Wembley.

There are even hopes that Iestyn Harris could come into contention, despite being initially ruled out of all three games because of a back injury. His condition is being reassessed in the light of Britain's poor performance in the series opener.

Great Britain can forget all about drafting in Keiron Cunningham. The St Helens hooker's hernia is worse than first thought and could require a second operation. That leaves Goodway's room for manoeuvre within his squad limited, although including the St Helens scrum-half or stand-off, Sean Long, somewhere in the 17 for Old Trafford is an obvious possibility.

— Dave Hadfield

Thriller at the Villa

Aston Villa vs Athletic Bilbao live from 7:15 tonight on 5

سكنا من الراجل

FOOTBALL

Harford favourite to replace sacked Pleat

David Pleat became the first Premiership managerial casualty of the season yesterday. As Phil Shaw reports, Sheffield Wednesday hope to appoint a successor this week.

Sheffield Wednesday, proping up the Premiership, are expected to make a third attempt to take Ray Harford to Hillsborough after confirming David Pleat's dismissal as manager.

Harford, currently in charge of West Bromwich Albion, turned down the post when he was manager of Wimbledon and later when he was coach at Blackburn. The fact that he has not signed a contract with the First Division club means that Wednesday, who aim to name Pleat's successor before Saturday's visit of Bolton, could avoid a protracted wrangle over his services.

Albion's chief executive, John Wile, put a brave face on the possibility of losing Harford last night. "We'd be disappointed if Ray hadn't been mentioned because he's a quality coach," he said.

Other names set to come under Wednesday's scrutiny include Sunderland's manager, Peter Reid, and Bruce Rioch, coach to Queen's Park Rangers. As in the case of Harford, the

recruitment of either would not break the rule introduced to prevent poaching within the Premiership.

Wednesday have been on the receiving end of such machinations, though that will not necessarily stop them pursuing Barnsley's Danny Wilson, Leicester's Martin O'Neill or Derby's Jim Smith, a lifelong Wednesdayite who lost out to Pleat in 1995.

The availability of Joe Royle and Lou Macari, both out-of-work managers with high-level experience, should also ensure their credentials are examined. Completing one of the longest shortlists of recent years are Barcelona's *éminence grise*, Bobby Robson, plus two ex-Wednesday managers, Ron Atkinson and Howard Wilkinson. Peter Shreeves, Pleat's assistant, has taken over on a caretaker basis but is not interested in stepping up more permanently.

The Wednesday chairman, Dave Richards, said: "There are many big names in the frame already and I can tell the fans they'll see someone fairly quickly. We won't see someone before the Bolton game but you will have a name."

Richards informed Pleat his two-and-a-half-year reign was over less than 24 hours after the 6-1 defeat at Manchester United on Saturday. "It's always difficult when you take somebody's livelihood away from him," he said. "But at the end

of the day the manager carries the can."

Last season, which Wednesday opened with four successive victories, Pleat steered them to seventh. This time, despite bringing in six new players, they have won only two out of 13 League matches and were put out of the Coca-Cola Cup by Grimsby. Compounding their fans' frustration, Sheffield United are enjoying a resurgence.

Pleat, who suffered the same fate at Leicester and Tottenham, said Richards had phoned him, warning that it was "the call he feared". With 25 games left, Pleat felt there was time to "turn things round", yet acknowledged that directors act on results rather than performances.

"We've played some good football in the last few matches. Unfortunately, drastic mistakes, particularly in defence, gave us mountains to climb. Some players have done so well, others have not. We've also had a nightmare in terms of injuries to people who were so crucial to last year's good performances, but that's history now."

Pleat spent £26.32m on 18 players, recouping £17.37m from selling 15. Four foreign signings - Marc Degryse, Regi Blinker, Orlando Trustfull and Darko Kovacevic - did not stay long, but his replacement will inherit talents such as the Italian attackers, Paolo Di Canio and Benito Carbone, as well as a transfer kitty of £10m.



David Pleat says goodbye to Hillsborough after being sacked as manager by Sheffield Wednesday yesterday

Photograph: Emrys

RUGBY UNION

Famous Five invite an elated Italy to the club

Italy will make their long-awaited quantum leap into top-level tournament rugby when they participate in the first Six Nations' Championship at the turn of the century. Not before time, says Chris Hewett.

One of rugby's few remaining gentlemen's clubs finally dragged itself into the late 20th century yesterday by throwing open its doors to the outside world. The Famous Five -

England, France, Ireland, Scotland and Wales - will become the Super Six when Italy, patronised for the best part of a decade, play their first international championship game, almost certainly in the year 2000.

Alan Hogg, chairman of the Five Nations' Championship, yesterday confirmed plans to extend the competition as soon as practicable after the 1999 World Cup. For Giancarlo Dondi, president of the Italian Rugby Federation, the development was only marginally less momentous than Julius Caesar's subjugation of the Britons.

"This is a dream that, only a few years ago, we would

never have thought could come true," he said. "It's down to the results we have achieved and it is a recognition of the great deal of hard work we have put into reaching the right standard. It can only be a source of joy and honour."

Dondi reported booming interest in the game, especially in the rugby stronghold of northern Italy. "We're growing rapidly," he said. "We have 35,000 registered players and we're making a great effort in our schools. I'm not saying we can compete with the great nations but leaving aside the top five - England, France and the three big southern hemisphere

nations - we are on a par with the others."

Only last season, the Italians beat Ireland in Dublin and took the Scots to within seven points at Murrayfield. They also came within a hair's breadth of turning over the Welsh in Rome and they are no longer fazed by visits from such luminaries as the Wallabies and the Springboks, whom they play in Bologna this weekend.

By way of breaking down more obsolete barriers, there was also news yesterday of rugby's likely return to the Olympic family. The International Board spokesman Peter McMullan confirmed that the

governing body was hopeful of putting in an appearance at the 2004 Games in Athens.

The ball is now in the court of the International Olympic Committee, which gave the sport the heave-ho from the Games after the United States beat France in the 1924 final.

With a World Cup scheduled every four years and the World Sevens on a similar time loop, it is difficult to imagine any Olympics occupying a high position on the leading nations' growing list of priorities. There is, however, a powerful faction inside the IB determined to restore rugby's place in the Olympics.

All Blacks arrive, page 30

GOLF

Montgomerie's major ambition unaffected by commitment to Europe

After securing his fifth successive European order of merit title Colin Montgomerie has decided not to go to the United States full-time. As Andy Farrell reports, he wants the best of both worlds in an attempt to win his first major championship.

Asked recently about Colin Montgomerie's plans to move to the US tour next year, Seve Ballesteros said: "We all know Colin. Today he says it's black

and tomorrow it's white." Ballesteros also said that Montgomerie had a "great responsibility to support the European tour".

This was a high compliment from the Ryder Cup captain to the man who ensured Europe's victory at Valderrama.

Though hardly in the same league as the Spaniard when it comes to charisma, Montgomerie has nevertheless taken over from Ballesteros as Europe's main overseas maker. Having completed five order of merit wins in a row, the 34-year-old Scot now has his sights set on Ballesteros's record total of six in all.

It had been thought that Mootgomerie would take up the US tour card he has earned from his performances in the States this year to help him win the major championship he has found so elusive. But in maintaining the European tour as his base, Montgomerie does not feel it will affect his ability "to compete to the highest standard".

"I have very clear priorities both professionally and personally," he continued. "My future schedule will be carefully worked around those European, US and worldwide events which will best help me to achieve my goals. I look forward

to playing an extended schedule in the US, which I know will assist me in my professional aspirations."

Instead of having to commit himself to a minimum of 15 events on the US tour, Montgomerie can play in up to 12 events, including the majors, on invitations. This year he played five times in the States outside the majors, so he is likely to swap three or four events from his European schedule to America next year.

His wife, Eimear, is expecting their third child in early May and it was always doubtful the family would be based full-time in America. "My family

has always, and always will, come before anything else and my schedule will work for all of us."

"In addition, the European tour has been very good for me and I hope I have repaid it a little. With what I have achieved, and with what we as a team have achieved, in particular with our Ryder Cup victories at Valderrama and Oak Hill, it is essential that we build on this success."

"There are lessons to be learned, but we have undeniable talent in Europe and it is inconceivable that I should choose to leave at this crucial stage."

Tour's fresh talent, page 28

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3447, Tuesday 4 November By Ashford Monday's Solution

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ACROSS

1 Coal burns, most abundant in heat (7)

5 Get information from one coming out with fire blazing (7)

9 After day turn animal practitioner needs cover (5)

10 Wild deer round island and tons of fish (3,6)

11 It's opposed to free movement of liquidity (9)

12 Just the same, a party can absorb it given time (5)

13 Foul place, we hear, where you could find a bed for the night (5)

15 Being forgetful left one in clear (9)

18 The epitome of plainness to fish workers (9)

19 One can't picture what it's trying to convey (5)

21 Germany's hostility to

23 Criticise account leading to debts, being grasping (9)

25 Can potential split neglect to show bliss? (9)

26 Old Chinese leader grabbed doctor in dance (5)

27 Ship requires energy in volume (7)

28 After suppressing the French the result is quietness (7)

DOWN

1 No gent has to make declaration identifying body in mortuary (7)

2 Defeat, securing votes cast for animals? (9)

3 A trio's playing shows a sense of proportion (5)

4 About to include a navy chap in meat-eaters (9)

5 Had little lot given yen to

6 Under an obligation to be on the way with deliveries (5,4)

7 Landlord could take profit thus from this cove (5)

8 Silly fellow gets one to out us wrongly (7)

14 Time to request civil engineer's special group (4,5)

16 Long sentence looks right for time-serving nobility? (4,5)

17 He won't even do any consistent work (3,3,3)

18 Quietly attaching soft material (7)

20 Riding horse comes to grief, stranded? (7)

22 Cancel insertion of cannula (5)

23 Enter quickly to make an arrest (3,2)

24 Desert traveller to find writer in US state (5)

be a parent (5)

Monday's Solution

SURFING IN THE OCEAN
VENUE IN THE OCEAN
RICHIE WING WALKER
LINKS IN THE OCEAN
DELICIOUS RECIPE
SITES IN THE OCEAN
AMERICAN TRAVELLER
BOYENNE EARNEST

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for years and asks...
ethical issues...

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is...
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US...
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EXCLUS

Louis

The fate of Louise...
Woodward rests with...
Judge Hiller Zobel...
So did the disappearance...
of key evidence, and...
strange reappearance...
almost at trial's end...
hamper her defence...
The judge will sleep...
perhaps for many...
His final decision...
posted on the internet...
and Don...
with many millions...
is waiting.